THE NOVELS OF MISS FERRIER

INHERITANCE VOL II

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MISS FERRIER'S NOVELS

EDITED BY

REGINALD BRIMLEY JOHNSON

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOL. IV.

THE INHERITANCE

VOL. II.

Gertrude repays Uncle Adam.

THE NOVELS OF SUSAN EDMONSTONE FERRIER

IN SIX VOLUMES

THE INHERITANCE

VOL. II

WITH INTRODUCTION BY R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON & ILLUSTRATIONS BY NELLY ERICHSEN

LONDON 1894
PUBLISHED BY J.M. DENT & Co.
ALDINE HOUSE Gt EASTERN St E.C.

KING ALF[illegible] COLLEGE

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THE INHERITANCE.

Chapter ii.

What man so wise, so earthly witt, so ware
As to descry the crafty cunning traine,
By which deceit doth maske in visour faire,
And cast her colours died deep in graine,
To seem like truth, whose shape she well can feigne.
Faery Queen.

NO sooner had Mr Lyndsay seen Miss St Clair safe within the castle walls, than he instantly retraced his steps, with the intention of returning to the summer-house, for the purpose of extricating her, if possible, from the mysterious thraldom in which she seemed to be held by this person. At the midnight rencontre in the wood he had asserted a right over her, which although she herself had disclaimed with almost frantic wildness, her mother had tacitly acknowledged by not directly denying. In the short conversation he had held with Mrs St Clair, subsequent to that meeting, she had with tears implored his silence—his secrecy—his forbearance—and, in broken and indirect terms, had given him to understand that this person had been engaged with her husband in certain money transac-

tions, which, out of regard to his memory, she was desirous of keeping concealed; and it was upon this ground he had asserted a claim upon Miss St Clair's fortune, which he had unwarrantably extended to her hand. This mangled and absurd account could not impose upon Lyndsay; but, at that time, he was almost a stranger to Mrs St Clair, and did not conceive himself authorised to nterfere in her concerns. He, therefore, contented himself with mildly admonishing her on the impropriety of such clandestine meetings, and recommending to her to lay this person's claims before Lord Rossville, as the proper protector of his brother's memory and his niece's interest. In the meantime, he yielded to Mrs St Clair's entreaties, and gave her his promise not to divulge what had passed, upon her solemn assurance that the affair was in the way of being amicably adjusted, and that she had taken effectual means of ridding herself for ever of this person's importunity. This promise, it now appeared, had not been kept; again Miss St Clair had been exposed to fresh insult in his presence, and he now thought himself entitled to interpose. With this purpose he walked quickly back, and had almost reached the summer-house, when he was met by Mrs St Clair; her countenance was agitated, and traces of tears were visible in her eyes. She did not, however, now seem to shun him; for she stopped and extended her hand to him, saying—"You are the very person I most wish to see—give me your arm, and let us return together—I have much to say to you."

"But there is a person there to whom I also have much to say; and I cannot attend you till I have first spoken with him." And he was passing on, when Mrs St Clair caught his arm,—

"I know whom you seek; but spare yourself the trouble—he is gone."

"Where?—which way?" eagerly demanded he; "but I must ascertain that myself," and he ran with all his speed to the summer-house. But it was deserted; and, though he looked long and keenly in all directions, not a trace of any one was to be seen. He was therefore obliged to retrace his steps, and soon overtook Mrs St Clair.

"You would not give credit to me, then?" said she, in a tone of reproach.

"I shall give credit to you now," answered he, "if you will tell me where I am likely to find the person I left here half an hour ago."

"I cannot tell—and, if I could, perhaps I would not. No good could possibly result from your meeting. —Your wish, I know, is to befriend my daughter and myself; and, be assured, I am far from insensible of the value of such a friend.—But, come with me,—I have much to say to you, much to confide to you of my dearest Gertrude."

Mrs St Clair's hyperbolical jargon was always offensive to Mr Lyndsay's good taste and right feeling; but there was something absolutely revolting in it at this time—there was something so strained and unnatural in it—such a flimsy attempt at thus seeming to court explanation, that he felt armed against the duplicity he was aware would be practised upon him.

"At another time I shall be ready to listen to any thing which concerns Miss St Clair," said he, coldly; "but, at present, I wish to put a few questions to the person——"

"Pardon me; but I know all you would say, my dear Mr Lyndsay, and you must allow me to anticipate those questions by the confidential communication I am now about to make to you. On your honour—on your secrecy, I know I may place the most unbounded reliance—I therefore require no assurances to satisfy me."

"I certainly can give none until I know how far secrecy may be compatible with honour."

Mrs St Clair affected not to hear this implied doubt, but went on—

"You have now had opportunities of becoming acquainted with my daughter—of forming your own opinion of her character—of—pardon a mother's vanity—of appreciating her charms and her graces;—but you know not—none but a mother can know, the treasures of her heart and mind."

Mrs St Clair paused and sighed, and Mr Lyndsay was too much surprised at such an opening to make any reply.

"Judge, then, at my grief and anguish at finding this gifted being, this idol of my affections, ensnared by the artifices of one every way unworthy of her, has been led to bestow her regards——"

"Pardon me," cried Lyndsay; "but I can have no possible right to be made the depository of Miss St Clair's sentiments by any but herself. I must be excused from listening to any thing more on that subject—I simply wish to know where I am likely to find the person who has, twice in my presence, dared to insult her."

"Yet it is only by hearing me patiently, and suffering me to take my own way in divulging the circumstances of the case as I think best, that I can possibly make you acquainted with them—either my lips must be sealed as to the whole, or you must listen to the whole without interruption.—I am mistaken if I tell you any thing new when I allude to my daughter's misplaced partiality; still more mistaken, if her future happiness is a matter of indifference to you."

Lyndsay made no answer; he felt that Mrs St Clair was weaving a web around him, but he could not bring himself to burst from its folds, and he suffered her to proceed.

"I will not attempt to paint to you the anguish of my heart at discovering that the innocent affections of my unsuspecting child had been thus artfully and insidiously worked upon by Colonel Delmour. I know him, and you know him, to be a selfish, mercenary, unprincipled man, as incapable of appreciating such a being as Gertrude, as she would have been of bestowing her affections on a character such as his, had not her imagination been dazzled and misled. But, alas! at nineteen, where is our judgment and discrimination? Yet at nine-and-twenty they will come too late—then, long before then, if she becomes the wife of Colonel Delmour, she will be the most wretched of women. Formed to find her happiness solely in the being she loves—noble, generous, upright, sincere herself, what will be her feelings when the mask drops, as drop it will, from this idol of her fancy, and she beholds him in his native deformity!—No,—sooner than see her the wife of Colonel Delmour, I take Heaven to witness, I would rather look upon her in her coffin."

Inflated as all this was, still there was some truth and right feeling in it; and he insensibly forgot his suspicions, and listened with profound attention.

"Yet I dare not express to Lord Rossville all that I feel, for neither can I accede to his views for the disposal of my daughter. Gertrude has too much taste and feeling—too much heart and soul, to be sacrificed to family pride and political influence; in fact, as far as regards her happiness, there is but a choice of evils in these brothers; but there is one ——" she stopped and hesitated—"there is one to whom I would, with pride and pleasure, have confided my dearest treasure, in the certainty that, as her judgment matured, so her love and esteem would in-

crease towards that one.—Why should I conceal from you my wish?"

Mrs St Clair made a full stop, and looked at Mr Lyndsay in a manner he could not misunderstand.

This was something he had not anticipated—it went far beyond what he had calculated upon, and he was thrown off his guard. His features betrayed his emotion, although he remained silent. There was a long pause. At length Mrs St Clair resumed—

"The time will come when the veil will fall from my daughter's eyes—as her judgment ripens, her imagination will decline—already I can perceive the work is begun, and time is all that is wanting to finish it;—but if, as may happen, she is hurried into a clandestine engagement, my hopes—her happiness—will be for ever blasted!—On the other hand, if, by any sacrifice, any stratagem, I can save her, can you blame me for the attempt, however wild or desperate it may appear?"

"I certainly could not blame a sacrifice, however vain it might prove," said Lyndsay; "but I must always disapprove of stratagems, even when successful—both together seem to me incompatible."

For a moment Mrs St Clair was thrown into confusion by this remark; but, quickly rallying, she replied—

"Yet the one may prove the consequence of the other—in my case I fear it has; and that in using what I conceived an allowable stratagem to save my daughter, I have sacrificed what I value next—the good opinion and esteem of Mr Lyndsay."

"It rests with yourself to remove any unfavourable impression I may have received—a few words will suffice."

"I feel that you will blame me—that you will condemn the step I have taken," said Mrs St Clair, in

evident embarrassment;—"it must appear to you strange—unworthy—unnatural; but you know not the difficulties of my situation.—Gertrude rash and ungovernable—Lord Rossville inflexible and exacting. If she marries Colonel Delmour, her fortune and her happiness are both alike blasted. To save her from that—at least to gain time, can you altogether condemn me if I have taken advantage of this person's unwarranted claim upon her fortune, to induce a belief in her mind that that claim does in reality extend to her hand, and that——But, oh Heavens!" exclaimed she, as they suddenly came in sight of the castle, "it must be very late—lights in the drawing-room, and company assembled—if I am missed——To-morrow we shall resume this subject; meantime I must fly;" —and she would have withdrawn her arm from Mr Lyndsay's, but he detained her.

"No," said he, "before we part, promise me solemnly that you will lay open to me the whole of this dark transaction—strange thoughts have taken possession of my mind—I will no longer connive at this mystery."

It was too dark to see the working of Mrs St Clair's features; but he felt the hand he held tremble in his grasp.

"To-morrow, then—to-morrow, dear Mr Lyndsay, I promise to satisfy you more fully," said she in a voice faint from agitation—"till then be silent, I conjure you—for Gertrude's sake be silent.—Oh! do not detain me—there is the warning bell."

And she darted forwards, and ran till she reached the door; then, turning round, she pressed Lyndsay's hand, and in breathless accents whispered, "For Gertrude's sake, then, you will be silent till to-morrow—you promise me this."

"Till to-morrow, then, be it," said he.

Mrs St Clair again pressed his hand in token of gratitude, then entered softly, and stole upstairs to change her dress; while Lyndsay, as he walked openly and deliberately to his apartment, thought "She has got the better of me, I fear, after all—but to-morrow will show."

——o——

Chapter lij.

Such deep despondence rends her trembling heart,
Conscious of deeds which honour cannot own.
EURIPIDES.

ALTHOUGH Mr Lyndsay had made all despatch in dressing, yet, upon entering the drawing-room, he found Mrs St Clair had got the start of him.

No appearance of hurry or agitation was now visible, unless in her more than usually brilliant colour. Her dress was handsome, and well arranged—her air, to common observers, easy and unembarrassed; and altogether she formed a striking contrast to her daughter, who sat by her, pale, thoughtful, and dejected, with the look of one who had almost unconsciously suffered herself to be dressed.

As Lyndsay entered he heard Mrs St Clair say to Lord Rossville, in answer to some remark of his—

"I was, indeed, caught to-day—I foolishly took alarm at Gertrude's absence during that prodigious shower, and set out in search of her myself; but we missed each other, and have now only met by the side of your lordship's charming fire."

Lord Rossville loved to be complimented upon his fires, which were always constructed after a model of his own, and were, of course, notoriously bad; but Mrs St Clair knew how to throw out a tub for a whale—her well-timed compliment led to a discussion upon

fires, stoves, and coals, which ended in the whole company being speedily involved in the intricacies of one of the Earl's own coal-pits, from which they were only rescued by a summons to dinner.

Mr Delmour had returned, bringing a band of his second-rate political allies along with him; and the conversation consequently took its cast from them, and was as dull as political discussions always are, unless when worse than dull—violent. Mrs St Clair entered into all that was said *con amore*, and was consequently thought, by the greater part of the company, to be an uncommonly charming, well-informed, and very fine woman. Lady Betty asked some questions as efficient as usual, and passed for a very worthy, sensible, affable old lady. Miss St Clair sat silent and absent, and indifferent to what was going on, and was pronounced a cold, haughty, insipid automaton. Such are the judgments daily passed upon as slight a knowledge of that within which passeth show—and so superficial a thing is popularity.

On quitting the dining-room, Mrs St Clair whispered her daughter to follow her to her own apartment; and no sooner were they there than, shutting the door with violence, she seemed as if eager to indemnify herself for the constraint she had been under.

"Gertrude!" cried she, all at once giving way to her agitation—"again you see me in your hands—again my fate hangs on your decision—again it is yours to save or to destroy me?"

Gertrude could not speak—her heart sickened at the evil she anticipated.

"But I will not go over the same ground I have done:—I tell you, I am at your mercy; but I will neither supplicate nor command—I leave you free—pronounce my doom, and do not fear even my reproaches."

Gertrude's senses almost forsook her, as the dreadful

idea flashed upon her that she was to be required to save her mother's life at the expense of becoming the wife of the dreaded Lewiston; and, sinking at her feet, in wild broken accents she besought her to spare her.

"Compose yourself, Gertrude," cried Mrs St Clair, suddenly calmed herself at sight of her daughter's still stronger emotion—"I tell you you have nothing to fear from me—I have promised that I will not even seek to influence you; all I require of you is to hear the alternative."

"Oh, no—no—spare me that dreadful alternative—kill me—but save me from him!" and she clung to her mother's knees with convulsive energy.

"Gertrude, this is madness—it rests with yourself to rid me of that man, I trust for ever.—Come, sit down by me, and listen;" and she seated herself at a writing-table, and placed her daughter beside her. After a pause, during which she seemed to be struggling with her feelings, she spoke—

"Gertrude, I cannot conceal from you that we are both in the power of a villain—I have told you, and I again repeat it—the circumstances which have placed me there I will only disclose with my dying breath, if even then;—how soon that may be, depends upon your decision. I cannot conceal from you that he *does* possess a claim over you—nay, be still, and hear me—which he is ready to relinquish, if, within twenty-four hours, I can raise five hundred pounds—this I must accomplish, or *my* ruin—*your* wretchedness for life, is inevitable."

Gertrude began to breathe at this unexpected relief.

"If he obtains this sum, he has pledged himself to quit the kingdom; and with worlds, if I had them, would I purchase his absence."

"But what are those mysterious claims which this man has upon me? why not bring them forward openly?

—let them be urged in the face of the world :—in this land of freedom—in my uncle's house—what have I to fear ?"

"As you value your father's memory, as you value my peace—my life—let this transaction be for ever buried in silence.—If there were a way to escape—if it were *possible* to release ourselves from him, can you suppose that I would have suffered what I have done —that I would have submitted thus to humble myself to my own child ?"

And Mrs St Clair dropt a few tears.

"But where is such a sum to be procured ?" asked her daughter, as she thought how she had already been stripped of every thing she could call her own. "I have nothing in my power !"

"I know you have nothing to give ; but you have only to ask and you will obtain.—My uncle can refuse you nothing ; and it is no such mighty matter in the future Countess of Rossville to borrow a few hundred pounds from a man to whom wealth is an absolute drug.—Here," said she, placing some paper before her, and putting a pen into her hand, "you have only to write, and I will dictate."

But the pen dropt from Gertrude's fingers.

"No—I cannot—indeed I cannot be guilty of such meanness—it is too degrading."

Mrs St Clair made no attempt to argue or remonstrate ; but, waving her hand with a sort of desperate calmness, she merely said—

"I am answered—leave me."

"Oh, mamma !—give me the paper—you shall be obeyed—tell me what I must say."

Mrs St Clair testified neither joy nor gratitude at this concession ; but immediately began to dictate the form of a letter to Mr Adam Ramsay, which her daughter implicitly followed—scarcely conscious of

what she wrote. In a calmer mood, she would have revolted from the duplicity and servility with which every line was fraught; but, in her present excitement of mind, her powers of thinking were suspended, and she was the mere passive instrument of her mother's will. At length it was finished; and, as Mrs St Clair sealed it, she looked at her watch—

"It will be just in time for the letter-box and no more; we must return to the drawing-room, and we can put it into the box as we pass through the hall."

"I cannot return to the company," said her daughter. "I am unfit for society after such a scene as this—I cannot dissemble."

"You can at least, it is to be hoped, exercise some self-controul, and not suffer yourself to be read and commented upon by every curious eye which chooses to look in your face. Happily 'tis one that even crying cannot spoil; you have only to wipe away your tears," and she applied her own handkerchief; "and see, not a trace of them remains.—Come, I insist upon it." And Gertrude suffered herself to be led to the drawing-room.

The only person with whom she now felt any companionship was Mr Lyndsay. There was a sort of protection in his presence which made her like to be near him: some unknown evil hung over her, from which it seemed as if he only could deliver her; and when he entered the room and approached her, she welcomed him with the only look of gladness that had brightened her face that day.

Although Lyndsay was pretty well aware of Mrs St Clair's real character, and saw, moreover, that she had some strong motive for wishing to mislead him, still her words had made some little impression upon him. He gave her full credit for her anxiety to detach her daughter from Colonel Delmour; but he was

somewhat sceptical as to her sincerity in wishing to bestow her upon him. He saw that Gertrude loved with all the delusion of romance, and, like many a young enthusiast, had mistaken her imagination for her mind. To have saved her from the fatal consequences of such infatuation he would have made any sacrifice, but his nature was too noble to join in a stratagem. With these feelings he drew near Gertrude; but Mrs St Clair had contrived to get herself and her daughter so built in by Lady Betty, her little table, her large basket, and her fat dog, that it was impossible to engage in a separate conversation. He could only talk to her, therefore, as he leant on the back of her chair, on common topics; but that he did in a manner to render even these amusing and instructive, without being either satirical or pedantic—for he possessed an accurate knowledge of most subjects of science and literature, and, like all really well-informed people, he threw out ideas and information without the slightest design of instructing others, or displaying his own acquirements. Insensibly Gertrude became interested in his conversation, and did not observe the entrance of the rest of the gentlemen till she heard Mr Delmour say, in answer to a question from one of the voters—

"Certainly—we may rely upon Frederick—indeed, he will probably return to Britain in the course of a very few months. It was quite unexpected, I believe, his having to accompany the regiment, as it was at one time settled that Colonel Brookes was to take the command, and I have never heard it explained why he devolved it upon my brother; but I understand he is to follow immediately, and then unquestionably Frederick will obtain leave—so we may reckon upon him confidently."

At the first mention of Colonel Delmour's name, Gertrude had ceased to be conscious of any thing else;

and, as his brother went on, she scarcely dared to breathe, lest she should lose a syllable of a subject so interesting—her very soul seemed to hang upon his words, insignificant as they were, and when he ended a deep flush of joy overspread her countenance, and lighted up her eyes.

"He will come then to clear himself from all unjust suspicions!" thought she; and as the transporting thought rushed upon her mind, she raised her eyes beaming with delight to Lyndsay. But they met his fixed upon her with an expression so grave, so uncongenial with her own, as instantly to make her feel how little his sentiments were in unison with her own, and a slight shade of displeasure crossed her face as she turned it away. He said nothing, but left his station, which was soon taken by Mr Delmour, to whose insipid verbiage she listened with sustained interest, in hopes of hearing the subject renewed. But nothing more was said. Mr Lyndsay had disappeared, and the evening wore away in a dull tedious manner.

——o——

Chapter liij.

I am not a man of law that has my tongue to sell for silver or favour of the world.—John Knox.

THE following day Mrs St Clair was confined to bed with a severe cold and rheumatism, the consequences of her walk the preceding day. All was anxious expectation, on her part and Gertrude's, for the answer from Mr Ramsay; but the post arrived, and brought only a note from the joyful Lilly, announcing the day of her nuptials, and inviting her aunt and cousin to be present at the celebration. As

Mr Larkins had no vote, a civil refusal was immediately returned. This disappointment was only a passing knell, as the thought suggested itself that uncle Adam might not think proper to trust a bill for five hundred pounds to the post, and would most probably send it by a special messenger.

By her mother's desire, Gertrude therefore stationed herself at the window, to watch the arrival of any one likely to be the bearer of the important despatch. Not sister Anne herself looked with more wistful eyes, or was oftener called upon to declare what she saw; and when, at length, she descried the identical old red hack-chaise belonging to the White Bear rocking up the avenue—not Blue Beard himself, sword in hand, could have caused greater consternation. This was an evil Mrs St Clair had never contemplated—a personal inquiry set on foot by the awful uncle Adam, was an idea too dreadful to have entered into her imagination; and when it was announced that Mr Ramsay wished to see Miss St Clair alone, her agitation was almost too much for her. Although trembling herself, Gertrude yet tried to soothe her mother into calmness; and having again and again assured her that she would not betray her—that she would take the whole responsibility upon herself, she left her to obey the summons. But her heart failed her when she reached the door of the apartment where he was, and she stood some minutes with her hand on the lock ere she had courage to turn it. At length she entered, but dared not lift her eyes to the cold sour visage whose influence she felt even without seeing. She tried to say something about trouble and kindness; but, in the agitation of her mind, she could not put a sentence together—she could only invite him to sit down, and that she did with trepidation. But, instead of complying, Mr Ramsay drew from his pocket an old black leather pocket-book, from which

he took Gertrude's letter, and, showing her the superscription, asked—

"Is that your writing?"

"It is," answered Gertrude, in a voice scarcely articulate.

"And wi' your ain free will and knowledge?"

She could not reply; but, in silent confusion, bent her head.

"And you're in want o' five hundred pound?"

Gertrude's colour rose to the deepest carnation, while she faintly answered—"I am."

Mr Ramsay gave something between a hem and a groan as he drew a paper from the very inmost pocket of his venerable repository, and held it out to her; then suddenly drawing back, and looking sternly upon her, he asked—

"You're no gawn to flee the country?—speak the truth."

Gertrude felt her very temples glow at this ignominious question; and, without speaking, there was something in her look and gesture which dispelled the old man's hasty suspicion.

"There's the money, then," said he, in a cold bitter tone.

Gertrude involuntarily shrunk from the ungracious-looking hand that was scarcely extended to her.

"Tak' it," cried he, in a still more angry voice—"tak' it; but you maun tak' this alang wi't—I would rather hae parted wi' five thousand—ay, five times five thousand, than that such a letter should hae come frae you;" and, tearing it in pieces, he threw it into the fire.

"Oh! do not say so," cried Gertrude, in great emotion, and catching his hand as he was about to leave the room.

"I maun say what I think—I'm no ane o' the folk

that can say ae thing and think anither—I'm disappointed in you."

"Yet if you knew—if the circumstances——"

Mr Ramsay shook his head.

"Ay, ay,—circumstances—that's aye the cry—but they maun be ill circumstances that need aw this concealment—even frae your ain mother."

"The time may perhaps come," cried Miss St Clair, in increasing agitation, "when I shall be able to convince you that I am not to blame—in the meantime, if you will trust me——"

"Dinna think it's the money I care for," interrupted Mr Ramsay; "I value that five hundred pound nae mair than if it were five hund'ed chucky-stanes; but I'll tell you what I valued, I valued you—and I valued your truth—and your openness—and your downrightness—and I'm disappointed in you!"

"Oh! do not judge so hardly of me," cried Gertrude; "the time will come when you will think better of me."

"The time o' a man o' threescore and ten will no be very lang in this world—we'll maybe meet nae mair—but, before we part, there's ae thing I maun tell you—Trust me, ye'll ne'er buy true friends—nor true love—nor true happiness, o' ony kind, wi' money—so beg, and borrow, and spend, as you will, but mind my words."

"Do not—oh! do not leave me in displeasure," cried Gertrude, bursting into tears, as he was again moving away.

"I feel nae displeeshure against you—I am only vexed, and mortified, and disappointed—I had ta'en a liking to you; but, as the auld sang says,

> Whene'er you meet a mutual heart,
> Gold comes between and makes them part.

It was gold that parted me frae her that was aw the

world to me, and it was a pleeshure to me to like you for being like her—but gold—gold—gold—has parted us next."

Gertrude had been prepared to stand the burst of uncle Adam's anger; but there was something in his querulous sorrow that went to her heart. There is, indeed, a feeling inexpressibly painful in adding to the afflictions of the aged, and heaping fresh sorrows upon the hoary head—many a bitter drop must even the most prosperous have drunk in the course of their long and weary pilgrimage, and woe be to the hand which would willingly pour fresh gall into the very dregs of their cup!

Some thought such as this filled Gertrude's heart, even to overflowing.

"My dear kind uncle!" cried she, as she again seized his hand, and even pressed it to her lips with reverence, while her tears dropped upon it—"Oh! that you could read my heart!"

Mr Ramsay, like all caustic people, thought it necessary to be more severe as he felt himself getting soft.

"It might soon be better worth reading than your letter—but there need be nae mair said about it—let byganes be byganes."

"But can you—will you forgive me?"

"I hae naething to forgi'e—I tell you I value the money nae mair than the dirt beneath my feet—but I'm vexed—I'm mortified, that you should hae brought yoursel' to such straits already."

"At least, in mercy, suspend your judgment."

"That's impossible. Suspend my judgment! that's ane o' your fashionable phrases—you seem to think a man can suspend his judgment as he would hang up his hat!—I canna help judging o' what comes to my ain knowledge; and I judge that, for a bairn like you to

want five hunder pound, without the knowledge o' your ain mother, or ony relation ye hae, canna be right—it's no possible—I maun be a born ideot if I'm no fit to judge o' that; and your letter!—I wad rather hae scrapit the mool for my bread, as I wad hae blacket paper to beg for siller!"

And taking up his little old bare shapeless beaver, he was moving away. Gertrude saw with grief it was in vain to attempt to clear herself in Mr Ramsay's eyes; he was evidently no less displeased at the demand than disgusted by the manner in which it had been made. Indeed, in proportion as he despised money himself, so he seemed to despise those who set any value upon it; and while he literally looked upon his purse as trash, nothing enraged him so much as a direct attack upon it.

"I am very unhappy at having lost your good opinion," said Gertrude, in a tone of deep dejection—"but nothing shall ever make me forget your kindness, my dear—dear uncle—may God bless you!"

Mr Ramsay made no reply—his heart yearned to the image of his beloved Lizzie, and he was on the point—not of taking her to his breast, for that was a weakness he would have blushed at even in thought,—but of holding out his cold blue jointless hand, and of according his forgiveness. He, however, checked himself as he thought of the magnitude of the offence, and the encouragement it would be giving to that, in his estimation, the most heinous of all offences—extravagance. With a sort of repressed "Weel—weel!" and a small wave of his hand, he therefore moved on without betraying his emotion, and seated himself in his old chaise, satisfied that he had done his duty in discountenancing vice by being as disagreeable as possible.

How rarely can we judge of people's hearts by their manners! and how seldom do we see "the manner

suited to the action," except in skilful actors or untaught children! How many a soft smile covers an unkind deed!—while it sometimes happens that we meet with acts of friendship from those who would be ready to "bandy words with us as a dog." But how much is it to be regretted when charity and good-will thus assume the garb of enmity, and when kind-hearted people convey their admonitions in a manner calculated to make us dislike the reprover, even while we admit the justice of the reproof!

On the present occasion Mr Ramsay's roughness and asperity produced no corresponding emotions in Gertrude's gentle heart. She felt only regret and sorrow at having been the means of embittering the scanty measure of the old man's enjoyment, and of having, she feared, for ever forfeited his good opinion and affection.

Chapter Xth.

Qu'un ami veritable est une douce chose!
LA FONTAINE.

BUT Mrs St Clair was in no mood to sympathise in the nature of her daughter's distress, as her own joy at receiving the money seemed to absorb every other consideration.

"There is still something for you to do, Gertrude, love," said she. "I had promised to have some conversation with Mr Lyndsay to-day; but you see my situation, and how unfit I am for such an exertion. You will, therefore, represent it to him, and, at the same time, convey to him my determination to meet him to-morrow, *coute qu'il coute;*" then, reading surprise in her daughter's countenance, she added, in a solemn tone, "Gertrude, whatever has appeared strange

and mysterious in my conduct towards you, I am now going to confide to him—will that satisfy you?"

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Miss St Clair, in an accent of astonishment and pleasure; "then, I am sure, all will be right."

"Mr Lyndsay appears to have made very rapid strides in your good graces," said her mother, with a look of displeasure. "Yesterday you seemed to me to be scarcely upon speaking terms.—Well, although I am no great admirer, scarcely a believer, in Platonics in general—yet there may be exceptions, when there is Methodism in the case;—you may, therefore, indulge in a sentimental religious flirtation if you will, though I must always think a daughter's best friend must be her mother; at any rate, she will be cautious how she talks of her mother, and suffers others to do it—you have simply to deliver my message, and beware of all comments. Now give me my writing materials—light that taper, and leave me."

Accustomed as she was to her mother's crooked policy even in the merest trifles, Gertrude's mind misgave her that something very false lay at the bottom of this pretended confidence; and she could not repress the painful suspicion that it was all a scheme to dupe him and deceive her. She, however, sought her cousin for the purpose of delivering her message; but it was not without embarrassment she repeated it, and she thought she read doubt and distrust in the manner in which he received it. Without expressing their mutual thoughts, both felt that sort of intuitive knowledge of what was passing in each other's minds, which needed not the aid of words to impart. Nothing could be said, indeed, to serve any purpose, beyond that of mere speculation and conjecture; and although to many a mind there is nothing more delightful than that sort of *guess-gossip*, yet Mr Lyndsay's rose superior to any

such petty enjoyment, and he rather sought to divert Gertrude's from dwelling on so disagreeable a subject.

To-morrow came as to-morrow hitherto has done; but, as is equally common, to-morrow fulfilled not the hopes of yesterday. Mrs St Clair's malady had assumed a more serious aspect. A physician was called in, who pronounced her disorder to be an acute rheumatic and nervous fever, which, though not of a malignant nature, was likely to prove severe and tedious in its operation. Here could be no deception; and as Gertrude was almost wholly confined to her mother's apartment, Mr Lyndsay felt his presence was useless, and therefore resolved on returning home. But, before he went, he sought an interview with Miss St Clair.

"I flattered myself," said he, "that before I lost sight of you again, I should at least have had the satisfaction of knowing the nature of the evils you are exposed to—but Mrs St Clair's situation puts an end to that hope for the present. I trust I leave you in safety, and I shall not stay long away; but if, in my absence, anything should occur to alarm you, promise that you will write to me instantly." Seeing her hesitate, he quickly added, "I am not seeking to engage you in any clandestine correspondence. I abhor all concealment as much as you can do, but—must I say it?—you require a protector."

"I have my mother—my uncle," said she, faintly; for she felt that her lips belied her when she named her mother, and she shrunk from the idea of appealing to her uncle; "and, besides," added she, "I have mamma's solemn assurance that this person has left Scotland, probably for ever;" but the manner in which she said this showed how little reliance she placed on this assurance.

"I cannot, to you, say what I think," said Mr

Lyndsay; "but will you then promise, if ever you have the slightest reason to suppose you are again to encounter the insolence of that man——" and Lyndsay's soft mild eyes flashed fire as he spoke, "promise me, then, that you will instantly claim Lord Rossville's protection."

But Gertrude dared not promise, and she remained silent.

"As it is," continued he, "I scarcely know whether I am justified in withholding from him what I have witnessed——"

"Oh! do not—my dear cousin, do not, I beseech you, breathe a syllable of what has passed to Lord Rossville, or anyone else—for my sake do not——"

"For your sake I would do much—well, then, you give me your word——"

"Do not urge me—why should you involve yourself in trouble—perhaps in danger—for me?—already you have risked your life to save mine.—No, leave me to my fate, whatever it is."

"I hate the word fate," said Lyndsay; "like chance, it is 'a word easily pronounced, but nothing more;' so I shall not leave you to any thing so vague and mystical. As for me, I am no duellist; and, besides, this person scarcely appears to be of that rank in society which would what is called entitle him to such satisfaction. Be assured, therefore, you will find me a bloodless champion; but without some assurance from you, I will not leave you unprotected."

Gertrude gave him her hand.

"My dear, generous cousin!" said she, much affected by the interest he showed for her, "I promise that if ever I am again in difficulty, and can have recourse to your assistance, I will—more I cannot, I dare not promise."

"Then, with that I must be satisfied—look upon

me as your friend, my dear cousin, and let us leave the rest to Heaven.—Farewell!"

Lyndsay's absence caused a blank to Gertrude, which she in vain tried to fill up; for, to an affectionate heart and refined taste, what can supply the want of that social intercourse which is the very aliment of the soul? Nothing could be more *triste* than this state of existence. The only varieties she experienced were in the querulous complaints of her mother—the verbose harangues of Lord Rossville—the senseless questions of Lady Betty—and the twice-told compliments of Mr Delmour.

"Is this life?" sighed she—"Ah! how different from what I had pictured it to myself!—'And thus I am absorbed, and this is life!'"

But Gertrude only felt what all persons of acute sensibility have felt in similar situations, that "to be no part of any body is to be as nothing."

Chapter V.

Avaunt! and quit my sight!—let the earth hide thee!
Macbeth.

THE dreary monotony of a snow-storm now reigned in all its morbid solemnity. All nature was shrouded in one common covering—neither heavens nor earth offered any variety to the wearied sight—any sound to the listening ear. All was sameness and stillness—'twas as the pulse of life stood still—of time congealed; or if a sound perchance broke the dreary silence that reigned, it fell with that dull muffled tone which only denoted the still burdened atmosphere.

Nothing can be more desolate and depressing than

this exterior of nature to those who, assembled under one roof, are yet strangers to those fireside enjoyments, that home-born happiness which springs from social intercourse. Here were no intimate delights—no play of fancy—no pleasures to deceive the hours and embellish existence. Here was nothing to palliate dulness—nothing to give time a zest—nothing to fill the void of an unfurnished brain. There was stupor of mind, without tranquillity of soul—restlessness of body, without animation of spirit. Gertrude felt her heart drop beneath the oppressive gloom which surrounded her, and thought even actual suffering must be preferable to this total stagnation of all enjoyment. But,

> . . . . All human things a day
> In darkness sinks—a day to light restores.

It was drawing towards the close of a day when the snow had fallen without intermission, but was now beginning to abate. Lord Rossville stood at his drawing-room window speculating on the aspect of the clouds, and predicting a change of weather, when he suddenly uttered an exclamation which attracted the whole of the family to where he stood.

A huge black object was dimly discernible entering the avenue, and dragging its ponderous length towards the castle; but what was its precise nature the still falling snow prevented their ascertaining. But suddenly the snow ceased—the clouds rolled away—and a red brassy glare of the setting sun fell abruptly on this moving phenomenon, and disclosed to view a stately full-plumed hearse. There was something so terrific, yet so picturesque in its appearance, as it ploughed its way through waves of snow—its sable plumes, and gilded skulls, nodding and grinning in the now livid glimmering of the fast-sinking sun—that all stood transfixed with alarm and amazement. At length

the prodigy drew near, followed by two attendants on horseback; it drew up at the grand entrance—the servants gathered round—one of the men began to remove the end board, that threshold of death——

"This is—is——" gasped the Earl, as he tried to throw open the window and call to his servants; but the window was frozen, and, ere his lordship could adopt another expedient, his fury was turned from the dead to the living; for there was lifted out—not "a slovenly unhandsome corpse, betwixt the wind and his nobility," but the warm, sentient, though somewhat discomfited, figure of Miss Pratt. All uttered some characteristic exclamation; but Lord Rossville's tongue clove to the very roof of his mouth, and he in vain laboured to find words suited to the occasion.

Whether the contents of the hearse should be permitted to enter his castle walls from such a conveyance, was a doubt in itself so weighty as for the moment to overpower every faculty of mind and body. True, to refuse admission to one of the blood of Rossville—a cousin to himself—the cousin of many noble families—the aunt of Mr Whyte of Whyte Hall—would be a strong measure. Yet to sanction such a violation of all propriety!—to suffer such an example of disrespect to the living—of decorum to the dead!—to receive into his presence a person just issued from a hearse!—Who could tell what distempers she might not bring in her train? That thought decided the matter.—His lordship turned round to ring the bell, and, in doing so, found both hands locked in those of Miss Pratt! The shock of a man-trap is probably faint compared to that which he experienced at finding himself in the grasp of the fair, and all powers of resistance failed under the energy of her hearty shake.

"Well, my lord, what do you think of my travel-

ling equipage ?—my Jerusalem dilly, as Anthony Whyte calls it ?—'Pon my word, you must make much of me —for a pretty business I've had to get here ; I may well say I've come through thick and thin to get to you ; at one time, I assure you, I thought you would never have seen me but in my coffin—and a great mercy it is, it's only in a hearse. I fancy I'm the first that ever thought themselves in luck to get into one ; but, however, I think I'm still luckier in having got well out of it—ha ! ha ! ha ! "

" Miss Pratt ! " heaved the Earl as with a lever.

" Well, you shall hear all about it by and by. In the meantime, I must beg the favour of you to let the men put up their hearse and horses for the night—for it's perfectly impossible for them to go a step further—and, indeed, I promised, that if they would but bring me safe here, you would make them all welcome to a night's lodging, poor creatures ! "

This was a pitch of assurance so far beyond any thing Lord Rossville had ever contemplated, that his words felt like stones in his throat, and he strove, but strove in vain, to get them up, and hurl them at Pratt's audacious jaws. Indeed, all ordinary words and known language would have been inadequate for his purpose. Only some mighty terror-compelling compound, or some magical anathema—something which would have caused her to sink into the ground—or have made her quit the form of a woman, and take that of an insect, would have spoke the feelings of his breast. While his lordship was thus gasping (like one under the influence of the nightmare) for utterance, Miss Pratt called to one of the servants, who just then entered—

" Jackson, you'll be so good as see these men well taken care of—and I hope Bishop will allow a good feed to the horses, poor beasts ! and——"

" Miss Pratt ! " at length bolted the Earl—" Miss

Pratt, this conduct of yours is of so extraordinary—so altogether unparalleled a nature, that——"

"You may well say that, my lord—unparalleled indeed, if you knew all."

"There's eight horses and four men," said Lady Betty, who had been pleasing her fancy by counting them. "Whose burial is it?"

"It's Mr M'Vitae's, the great distiller.—I'm sure, I'm much obliged to him—for if it hadn't been for him, poor man! I might have been stiff and stark by this time." And Miss Pratt busied herself in taking off her snow-shoes, and turning and chafing herself before the fire.

"Miss Pratt," again began the Earl, mustering all his energies—"Miss Pratt, it is altogether inconceivable and inexplicable to me how you, or any one else, could possibly so far forget what was due to themselves and me as to come to my house in a manner so wholly unprecedented, so altogether unwarrantable, so—so—so perfectly unjustifiable—I say, how any person or persons could thus presume——"

A burst of laughter from Miss Pratt here broke in upon the Earl's harangue.

"My dear Lord Rossville, I beg your pardon; but really the notion of my *presuming* to come in a hearse is too good—'pon my word, it's a piece of presumption few people would be guilty of, if they could help it. I assure you I felt humble enough when I was glad to creep into it."

"I repeat *presume*, Miss Pratt," cried his lordship, now fairly kindled into eloquence, "to presume to bring to my house an equipage and attendants of—of—of the most hideous description—and farther, to presume to expect that I am to permit the hearse of Mr M'Vitae, the distiller — the — the democratic distiller, with eight horses and four men, to—to—to—to—to trans-

form Rossville Castle into an inn—a—a caravansera of the very lowest description — a — a — a charnel-house— a—a—a receptacle for vehicles employed for the foulest—the vilest—the—the most unseemly of all purposes! — Jackson, desire those people, with their carriage and horses, to quit my grounds without one moment's delay."

"My dear Lord Rossville! — (stop, Jackson) — Bless my heart! you're not going to turn away the people at this time of night! — Only look how it's snowing, and the sky as black as pitch—there's neither man nor beast fit to travel a foot this night.—Jackson, I'm sure you must be sensible that it's perfectly impossible for them to find their way now."

Jackson, who had, like his betters, felt considerable *ennui* during the storm, and rather rejoiced at the thoughts of any visitors, however inferior to himself in rank and station, confirmed the assertion with all due respect—but to little purpose.

"At all events, whatever may be the consequence," said his master, "they certainly can, and indeed positively *must*, return by the road which they have recently traversed."

"They may just as well attempt to fly as to go back the way they came—a pretty fight they had to get through! I only wish you had seen it—the horses up to their shoulders more than once in the snow even then, and it's now snowing ten times worse than ever —so I leave you to judge how they are to drag a hearse back nine miles at this time of night."

Here Jackson re-entered with a manifesto from the hearse-drivers and company, stating that they had been brought two miles and a half out of their way, under promise of being provided in quarters for the night, and that it was now impossible for them to proceed.

"It will be a pretty story if I'm landed in a lawsuit,"

cried Miss Pratt, in great alarm, as the Earl was about to reiterate his orders; "and it will make a fine noise in the county, I can tell you."

Mr Delmour, who had been out investigating matters, here struck in; and having remarked that it might be an unpopular measure, recommended that Mr M'Vitae's *suite* should be accommodated for the night, with strict charges to depart by dawn the following morning; and the Earl, though with great reluctance, was prevailed upon to agree to this arrangement.

Chapter Ivj.

> Our life is but a pilgrimage of blasts;
> And every blast brings forth a fear,
> And every fear a death.
>
> QUARLES.

MISS PRATT having carried her point, and dried, warmed, fed, and cherished her person in all possible ways, now commenced the narrative of what she called her unparalleled adventures. But, as has been truly said, there are always two ways of telling a story, and Miss Pratt's biographer and herself are by no means at one as to the motives which led to this extraordinary expedition. Miss Pratt set forth that she had been living most comfortably at Skinflint Cottage, where she had been most kindly treated, and much pressed to prolong her visit; but she had taken an anxious fit about her good friends at Rossville,—she had had a great dreaming about them the night before last, and she could not rest till she had seen them all. She had, therefore, borrowed the Skinflint carriage, and set out at the risk of her life—but the horses had stuck in the snow, &c. &c. &c.

[illegible]

After every other alternative had been tried in vain, there remained no other than to leave the carriage; and for Miss Pratt, her green bag, and the coachman to mount the horses, and proceed to the nearest habitation. But the snow fell thick and fast—Miss Pratt could not keep her seat on the bare back of a huge stiff plough-horse, whose every movement threatened dislocation, if not dissolution; and even her dauntless spirit was sinking beneath the horrors of her situation, when, as she expressed it, by mere dint of good luck, up came Mr M'Vitae's hearse, drawn by six stout horses, who had been living for the last two days at heck and manger in Mr M'Vitae's well-filled stables. After a little parley, and many promises, they were induced, nothing loth indeed, to turn out of the way and deposit Miss Pratt and her bag at Rossville Castle.

But even this account failed to still the tumult in the Earl's breast—there was something in having a hearse, and the hearse of Mr M'Vitae, the radical distiller, thus forced within his walls, he could not away with. Death, even in its most dignified attitude, with all its proudest trophies, would still have been an appalling spectacle to Lord Rossville; but, in its present vulgar and almost burlesque form, it was altogether insupportable. Death is indeed an awful thing, whatever aspect it assumes. The King of Terrors gives to other attributes their power of terrifying: the thunder's bolt—the lightning's flash—the billow's roar—the earthquake's shock—all derive their dread sublimity from Death—all are but the instruments of his resistless sway.

From these, and even from his more ordinary emissaries, Lord Rossville felt secure; but still a lurking fear had taken possession of his mind, and he could not divest himself of the train of ideas which had been excited by beholding, in horrid array, Death's cavalcade approach his dwelling. He passed a restless

night—he thought of what the county would say, and what he should say to the county—he thought of whether he would not be justified in banishing Miss Pratt for ever from his presence. When the first faint grey streak of light appeared, he rang his bell to inquire whether the funeral procession had departed; but a fresh fall of snow during the night had placed the castle and hearse in a complete state of blockade. He rose and opened the window to ascertain the fact, but nothing was to be seen but a fast-falling blinding snow—he next went to the door, but there the snow lay six feet deep—he returned to bed, but not to sleep—and when his servant entered in the morning, he found his master a lifeless corse.

Whence it came, who can tell? Whether from cold, apoplexy, mental disquiet, or irreversible decree?

"When houre of death is come, let none aske whence nor why!"

Chapter Vij.

And feel I, Death, no joy from thought of thee?
YOUNG.

GERTRUDE was now Countess of Rossville, and how often had her heart bounded at the anticipation! How slight a thing seems the life or death of an individual to whom we are united by no ties of affection, when merely thought of as "to be or not to be," and Death and his awful attributes are not made manifest to our senses! But how sad and solemn when we come to witness, even in those most alien to us, the last struggle—the dread change—the total extinction of mortality!

As the youthful Countess looked on her uncle's cold

remains, she forgot all her dreams of vanity, and wept in real sadness, as she thought how many a painful emotion of anger and disappointment she had excited in that now still unconscious form. Oh! how bitter are the upbraidings which come to us from the lips of the dead! Would that the living could lay the too tardy reflection to heart!

Gertrude could not blame herself; but she sorrowed in the sorrow of a warm ingenuous heart that she should ever have offended the pale and peaceful image now stretched before her. But tears, though shed in earnest, are, alas! often shed in vain.

> As from the wing no scar the sky retains,
> The parted wave no furrow from the keel;
> So dies in human hearts the thought of death,

when that thought is not embalmed by affection.

The funeral obsequies were celebrated with a pomp of heraldry—a display of solemn state, which would, if aught on earth could, have brightened the dull cold eye of the dead to have witnessed.

The Earl had left no settlements—he had destroyed his original ones, and been planning others of a totally different nature, which, had he lived, would certainly have been put in execution, to the utter exclusion of Lady Rossville, unless as the wife of Mr Delmour.

Gertrude wished for nothing more ardently than for an opportunity of coming to an explanation with that gentleman, and at once putting an end to the delusion under which he evidently laboured. But there was so much formal politeness—so little of the energy of passion, in his addresses, that she felt it would be like anticipating, were she to appear to look upon him in the light of a lover.

She was, therefore, obliged to endure the annoyance

of his little punctilious assiduities, which, though for ever claiming her notice, were yet too vapid and insignificant either to please or offend—they were merely flat, stale, and unprofitable. From these she was soon, however, unexpectedly released. A few days after the Earl's funeral an express arrived with the intelligence of the death of his cousin, the Marquis of Haslingden—he had died of the breaking of a blood-vessel, and, in so doing, had rendered Mr Delmour presumptive heir to the dukedom. As his presence was now required in the south, he immediately set about preparations for his departure; but, previous to setting off, he sought an interview with Lady Rossville, for the purpose of expressing his regret at being under the necessity of leaving her at such a time, and his assurances of returning as speedily as the nature of the mournful circumstances under which he was called away would permit—concluding with the hope that, whenever propriety sanctioned the fulfilling of his late lamented uncle's intentions, his fair cousin would at once testify her respect for the wishes of the dead, and complete the happiness of the living. However much Gertrude had longed for this opportunity, she now felt, as every delicate mind must feel in a similar situation, that 'tis a nervous and a painful thing to tell a person face to face,

> I don't like you, Dr Fell,
> The reason why, I cannot tell;
> But I don't like you, Dr Fell;

for, however it may be expressed, that is generally the substance of a refusal. The words must be uttered, however, in some shape or other; and, collecting herself, she, with that self-possession which, in such cases, speaks even plainer than words, expressed her regret at the misunderstanding that had so long been allowed to exist—assured him that the Earl had been

perfectly aware of her sentiments—they were such as made it impossible she ever could do honour to her uncle's intentions.—Politician as he was, Mr Delmour could not conceal the surprise and pique with which he received this communication. He had all along been fed to consider his union with the heiress of Rossville as a settled point—he had, therefore, looked upon her as his destined bride—fortunately a very beautiful, charming, elegant girl, to whom it was his part to be more than usually polite and attentive—and now, at the very moment when he had extended his hand to seize the prize, like a second Ixion, he found he had grasped a cloud. But whatever were his feelings on the occasion, he had too much pride to express anything beyond mere surprise at the very awkward and unaccountable misapprehension which had thus involved both parties in so unpleasant a dilemma. He certainly could not accuse Gertrude of having varied with the circumstances of her fortune, since his own was now, to all appearance, much more brilliant than at the commencement of their acquaintance; but it was evident he thought himself extremely ill used by her, and therefore took a very distant and stately farewell.

When informed of Mr Delmour's dismissal, Mrs St Clair's indignation against her daughter was no less violent than unaccountable.

"You were born to be my ruin!" was her first exclamation.—"To refuse, situated as you are, an alliance that would have secured you against the possibility of——You know not what you have done—infatuated that you are!"—And she paced the chamber with a disordered mien; while Gertrude, too much accustomed to her mother's wayward moods to attach any peculiar meaning to her words, in silence allowed the storm to take its course. But, as is commonly the case with unjust displeasure, it took such a wide range,

and branched out into so many ramifications of anger and invective, that "labour dire and weary woe" it would be to attempt to follow her through all the labyrinths of her ill-humour. Mrs St Clair was, indeed, a riddle hard to solve. Although not quite so hypocritical as to pretend to be inconsolable at the death of the Earl, yet certain it was that event had agitated her in no common manner or degree. And her daughter's exaltation, which, for so many years, had been the sole object of her ambition, seemed, now that it was obtained, to have lost all its value in her eyes—the only visible effect it had yet produced had been to render her more than ever violent, irritable, and capricious. She still kept her own apartment—refused to see anybody on the plea of her health—was restless and dissatisfied—and, in short, showed all the symptoms of a mind ill at ease.

——o——

Chapter VIII.

. . . . . Love!
There is no spirit under heaven that works
With such delusion. BEN JONSON.

THE want of a will is a desideratum which invariably causes disappointment to many an expectant. Perhaps, on the late occasion, no one felt more chagrined at this failure of the Earl's than Miss Pratt. Although there was little difference in their ages, yet from being of a lighter and more active nature, she had always looked upon herself as at least twenty years younger, and had all along settled in her own mind that he was to die long before her; and from having at first contemplated the possibility of his leaving her a small legacy, she had next considered it as highly

probable that he would leave her something very handsome, and, at length, all her doubts had resolved themselves into the absolute certainty of his doing something highly to his own credit. Not, to do her justice, that she looked to it merely for her own aggrandisement, but as something to bequeath to Anthony Whyte in his necessities; as she declared that, in these times, Anthony found he was pinched enough with his three thousand a-year.

Miss Pratt could not, therefore, reconcile herself to this desideratum; but spent her days in rummaging the house, and expressing her amazement (which, far from lessening, seemed daily to increase) that the will—for a will there must be—should be missing, and her nights in dreaming that the will had been found. The will, she was certain, would cast up yet—nobody knew poor Lord Rossville better than she did—she might say they had been like brother and sister all their lives; and nobody that knew him—worthy, well-meaning man that he was!—could ever believe that he would go out of the world, and leave things all at sixes and sevens. Not so much as ten guineas even for a mourning ring to his oldest friends and nearest relations—the thing was quite impossible. She only wished she had access to his repositories, she was sure she would soon bring something to light—some bit paper, or letter, or jotting, or something or another, just to show what his intentions were; and she was sure Lady Rossville would willingly act up to it, whatever it was—for he was a just, upright, friendly, liberal, well-principled, well-meaning, kind-hearted man—an honourable-minded man, with a great deal of strong natural affection—a man that had always, and upon all occasions, shown himself her steady friend and well-wisher, &c. &c. &c. There was one drawer in particular, the right-hand drawer of his writing-table, the end next the window—she had several

times, when she had occasion to speak to him in his study, found him busy there.—Poor man! the very last time she saw him there, he was working amongst some papers in that very drawer—she wondered if it had been well searched, and so on.

Gertrude had no doubt but that due search had been made there as in other places by the constituted authorities—and she had too much respect for the late Earl's feelings when living to suffer Miss Pratt to invade his repositories now that he was dead; but, weary of hearing the same changes rung upon this drawer, she one day suddenly resolved to examine it and some other of her uncle's private repositories. For that purpose she repaired to his apartment, and began her scrutiny. It was with a feeling of solemnity she displayed the relics of the departed, and sought in vain for any indication of his will or intentions—nothing of the kind was to be seen, for nothing of the kind was in existence—only bundles of bills and packets of letters were contained in the drawer, which Miss Pratt had vainly flattered herself held her future fortunes. The Countess was about to close it, when her eye was arrested by one of those packets—it was titled, "Correspondence with Colonel F. Delmour—Private—No. 1."

"Can this be the correspondence," thought she, "on which the happiness of my life depends?" and her colour ebbed and flowed as the contending emotions of hope and fear rushed over her heart. "And am I justified in thus stealing on the secrets of the dead?—is it right—is it honourable?" she paused—"Yet my all of happiness is at stake—why should I hesitate?" And with a trembling hand she unfolded the copy of a letter from Lord Rossville, written, it seemed, on his first discovering the attachment that existed. It was very angry and very wordy; and the substance of it was calling upon his nephew instantly to resign all pre-

tensions to Miss St Clair's hand, and to authorise him to annul any engagement subsisting between them, upon pain of his most serious displeasure. Gertrude's heart throbbed violently as she turned to the answer to this, in the well-known, careless, elegant hand of her lover. It was short—expressed the deepest regret at having incurred his uncle's displeasure—pleaded the excess of his passion as the only excuse, and declared, in the most unequivocal terms, the utter impossibility there was in his ever complying with his lordship's commands by relinquishing that which was dearer to him than life.

Tears of delight burst from Gertrude's eyes as she read this decided avowal of unalterable attachment.

"How could I be so base as ever to doubt—ungenerous that I am!" was her first exclamation; and, in the exultation of the moment, she felt as though worlds could never again for a moment shake her faith. But there were more letters to peruse. The next in order was another from Lord Rossville. It was in part a repetition of what her uncle had said to herself, when he declared his intention of disinheriting her and settling the estates upon Mr Delmour; but his resolutions were still more strongly expressed and fully detailed in the letter; and he concluded by an offer of instantly paying his nephew's debts, and settling ten thousand pounds upon him, provided he would come under an engagement never to marry Miss St Clair.

"This, then, is the test!" thought Gertrude; and, with a beating heart, she opened another letter in Colonel Delmour's hand-writing, and read as follows:—

"My dear Uncle,

"It was only on my return here late last night that I found your letter; and I have passed a sleepless night ruminating on the heartrending alternative you offer to me. Were my own interests solely at stake, I should

not hesitate a single moment;—but the thought of reducing the adored object of my affections to poverty —of being the means of bereaving her of the possessions of her ancestors, and depriving her of your favour, is so overwhelming, that I find myself quite unable to come to any conclusion at present. Heaven knows how much I could endure for her sake! but it is torture to me to think of her sacrificing so much for mine. Yet, to resign her for ever, is distraction. I repeat, it is impossible for me all at once to resolve upon a point on which the happiness of my life is at issue. Pray, allow me a few days to form my resolution, and believe it is my most earnest wish to gratify you in all possible ways. The regiment is on the point of embarking for Gibraltar; but I expect Brookes to take the command, and that I shall obtain leave to remain at home for the present. You shall hear from me again whenever I can summon resolution to *cast the die*. Meantime, you will, of course, suspend all farther proceedings. Believe me,

"My dear Uncle,

"Yours, with the sincerest esteem and affection,

"F. M. H. Delmour.

"P.S.—You may rely upon my secrecy; and I agree with you that it is better Robert should not be made acquainted with what has passed—at present."

Here was "confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ," to the generous, confiding heart of Gertrude.

Yes! it was upon her account that he hesitated—it was for her happiness that he was tempted to sacrifice his own!—Ah! how little did he know her, if he deemed that wealth and grandeur could ever stand in competition with his affection—*that*, the peculiar treasure of her soul—that, the pearl of great price—the rest, was it not all mere earthly dross? Without that,

what were rank and fortune to her? But to share them—to bestow them upon the chosen of her heart, was indeed a blissful privilege! And the whole tenor of her mind became bright as

The first blush of the sun-gilded air.

Impatient to vindicate the honour of her lover, she hastened to her mother's apartment. She found Mrs St Clair in the same posture in which she had so frequently observed her since the Earl's death—seated at a writing-table—her head resting on one hand—a pen in the other, as if meditating how to begin a letter, which after all this preparation, did not appear yet to have been commenced.

With cheeks glowing, and eyes sparkling with triumph and delight, Gertrude placed the packet in her hands.

"Read these, mamma," said she, in a tone of exultation—"and if ever you had a doubt, surely these must satisfy you."

Mrs St Clair took the letters, and read them in silence; then, as she folded up the last, she said, with a sarcastic smile—

"My doubts are indeed ended—I am now confirmed in what I have all along suspected: Colonel Delmour loved you from the first as the heiress of Rossville—as the Countess of Rossville I have no doubt he will adore you."

Gertrude was struck dumb: her mother went on—

"It is evident to me—it would be to any one in their senses—that the only struggle here is caused by self-interest. He, like many other people, doubted whether Lord Rossville really possessed the power of disinheriting you; and he, therefore, prudently evades the question, until he has ascertained that point. It would have been selling his right, indeed, for a mess

of pottage, to have resigned the heiress to twenty thousand a-year for a paltry ten thousand pounds, and the payment of his tailor's bill; but, on the other hand——"

"It is enough," said Lady Rossville, as, with a burning cheek, and in a tone of wounded feeling, she collected the letters, and was turning to leave the room.

"No, Gertrude, it is not enough," cried her mother, pointing to her to be seated; "sit down, and listen to me, at least with calmness, if not with respect—I will not be interrupted—I will be heard."

Her daughter seated herself in silence, but evidently struggling with her feelings.

"I cannot see you as I do, the dupe of an artful unprincipled man, without making an effort to open your eyes to the dangers of your situation—yet I own I almost despair when I behold you thus wilfully closing them against the light, which would carry conviction to any mind that was not the slave of its own delusions—yes, I repeat, it is clear as noonday that it is solely as the heiress of Rossville you are the object of Colonel Delmour's attachment. *He* hesitate about reducing the adored object of his affections to poverty! *he* distracted at the thoughts of bereaving her of the possessions of her ancestors!—stuff!—who that knows any thing of the character of the man would, for an instant, believe that he would hesitate about sacrificing the whole world, were it to promote his own interest? Gertrude, I would not unnecessarily pain you, but I consider it my duty to save you from the snares I see set for you.—Why should you distrust me?—What interest can I have in deceiving you, my child?"

"I know not—I cannot tell," said the Countess, with a sigh; "If I *am* distrustful——"

She stopped, but Mrs St Clair felt the reproach implied in her look and accent.

"'Tis I who have made you so, you would say—you can distrust me, your guide—your companion—your friend—your mother!" Mrs St Clair's voice here faltered with emotion—"although you cannot even doubt the faith of one who, but a few months since, was an utter stranger to you."

"But in those few months, what have I not learnt?" said Lady Rossville, in much agitation; "enough to make me sometimes doubt the evidence of my own senses—certainly enough to teach me to distrust even my own mother."

Mrs St Clair's face crimsoned.

"Beware how you provoke me, Gertrude!" cried she, with much vehemence: "I will endure no taunts or reproaches from you. Although, as Countess of Rossville, you may wish to forget what is due to me as your mother, I will *not* relinquish my claims to you as my daughter—I *will* be obeyed!" continued she, with increasing violence, "and I command you from henceforth to think of that man no more."

"Then you command me to do what is impossible," said the Countess, giving way to tears. "Oh, mamma! why will you force me to this alternative? Why must I be accounted rebellious — undutiful — because I cannot see as you see, and think as you think? I call Heaven to witness, I would ever render to you the respect—the reverence of a child; but I cannot — no, I cannot — yield you the submission of a slave."

"And where is the child who owes to a parent what you owe to me?" demanded Mrs St Clair, warmly; "where is the child possessed of such an inheritance—of rank—of power—of riches—of beauty —of talents?—and where is the mother who would

not feel as I do, at seeing them all sacrificed to the cupidity of an artful unprincipled man?"

"And is it because I possess all these advantages that I am to be denied the privilege of the poorest and the humblest?" asked Lady Rossville, her voice faltering with emotion. "Of what value to me are all those gifts, if I may not share them with those I love?—ah! how much rather would I forego them all——"

"Than not indulge your own weak, wayward, childish fancy," cried her mother, with indignation: "this is not to be borne! How shall I tear that bandage from your eyes!—If you doubt me, will you credit the testimony of your friend—your counsellor—your Platonic admirer, Mr Lyndsay?"

"I respect and esteem Mr Lyndsay," said the Countess; "but I will not adopt his prejudices."

"Will you believe the voice of the world, then?"

"I already know all that the world can say. It will tell me he is thoughtless—extravagant—imprudent—erring, it may be, in many things; but all that he has told me himself—such he once was—till—till he loved."

Mrs St Clair groaned. "Then whose testimony will you admit, since you reject mine?—You reject Mr Lyndsay's—you reject that of the whole world."

"I will receive none," said Lady Rossville, mildly, but firmly.—"Erring, perhaps faulty, he may have been; but to doubt that he loves me——*there* I will receive no one's testimony but his own."

"Then you are lost!" exclaimed Mrs St Clair, in violent agitation.—"But it must not—shall not be. You dare not marry without my consent—without the consent of——" she stopped—"I tell you——"

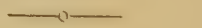
"If I am to be ruled by any authority, it must be solely by my mother's," said Gertrude, proudly; "no other being has, or ever can have, the right to controul

me in this point. Once before I promised that I would form no engagement without your consent until I had attained the age of twenty-one—I am now willing to repeat it—but, in the meantime, my preference must be left free. And now, mamma, let us end this strife—it may be my misfortune to differ from you—do not—oh! do not let that difference divide us!—I will be always yours in affection, if not in sentiment."—And she would have embraced her, but her mother repelled her.

"Such a compromise is a mere mockery," said she, with bitterness; "but I too am sick of altercation—such as it is, then, for the present your promise must suffice—let me trust in Heaven that your delusion may be dispelled ere it be too late!"

"*If* it is a delusion, I too join in the prayer," said the Countess, but more in the tone of lofty assurance than of lowly supplication.

This contest with her mother only served to strengthen Gertrude—as violence invariably does—in her own opinions. There was something too in the very suspense calculated to give a play to her imagination, and fascinate the youthful heart far more than any sober certainty of waking bliss could have done. She would have shrunk from acknowledging even to herself that she harboured a doubt; but how many a stranger feeling mingles unknown to ourselves with the home-born sentiments of our hearts!



Chapter lix.

With an old bachelor, how things miscarry!
What shall I do? Go hang myself—or marry?
HORACE.

THERE was a duty which Gertrude was particularly anxious to discharge, and that was the debt she had incurred to Mr Adam Ramsay. Having procured a bill for the money, she therefore ordered her carriage one day; and having contrived to elude the curiosity of Lady Betty and the vigilance of Miss Pratt, she set out alone in hopes of making her peace—at any rate of relieving her mind from the weight of pecuniary obligation. A thaw had begun—but just begun; consequently, both earth and atmosphere were in that raw, chill, dubious state, which combines all the discomforts of foul and frosty weather, and even in the narrow precincts of uncle Adam's parterre both were displayed in perfection. The snow, though soft, lay deep betwixt his house and the little gate which separated him from the road; no attempt had been made to clear it away or open a passage; and an *avalanche*, which had fallen from the roof of the house, lay undisturbed upon the steps, and effectually blocked up the door. Altogether it had a desolate, uninhabited look, different from the neatly scraped paths and sanded steps belonging to the houses on either side; and Gertrude began to fear, she knew not what, from this desolate exterior. Meanwhile the footman having, with some difficulty, contrived to wade up to the door, knocked loud and long in all the energy of insolence and ill humour—but no answer was returned. Again and again the summons was repeated, in a manner enough to have raised even the drowsy porter in Macbeth—but with no better success. At length the servant turned away in despair.

"There is nobody within, my lady."—But at that moment his lady's eye was caught by a view of the back of uncle Adam's wig, as its *queue* hung in expressive silence over a chair in the parlour. It retained its posture, however, so immovably, that it seemed as though it would have required a touch of galvanism to ascertain whether it was suspended from a dead or a living skull. Alarmed at the immobility of this appendage of uncle Adam's brain, Lady Rossville hastily called to have the carriage door opened; and, without exactly knowing what she *would* or *could* do, she stepped out, and made the best of her way through the snow towards the house. Scarcely had she touched the door, when, to her surprise, it flew open, as if impelled by the invisible hands of the White Cat herself. No invisible hands were there, however; for there stood uncle Adam *in propria persona*, with his pigtail, and his cold blue radish-looking fingers.

"Come in—come in," cried he, in no very inviting tone, as Gertrude stood for a moment transfixed with astonishment at this sudden resuscitation; "I'm sure this is no weather to be stannin' at open doors,"—and violently shutting it, he led the way to his little parlour. A dead fire—a dirty hearth—and the remains of a wretched breakfast, were the only traces of civilisation to be descried.

"I was afraid something was the matter," said Gertrude, as she entered. "My servant knocked repeatedly, but could get no answer; but I am happy to find it was a false alarm, and that I have the pleasure of seeing you well, my dear uncle."

Mr Ramsay hemmed.

"You may see something's the matter, or the things wadnae be stannin' there till this time o' day—there's naebody in the hoose but mysel'; and I wasna gawn to play the flunky to thae idle puppies o' yours," point-

ing to the Countess's dashing lacquey, as he strutted before the window; "and I never wish to see onybody at my door that cannot chap at it themsels;" then, muttering between his teeth, "fules shouldnae hae chappin-sticks," he seemed to recover a little, at having thus vented his venom in ignominious epithets, applied to his niece and her spruce serving-man.

Lady Rossville was much at a loss how to proceed. At no time did she perfectly comprehend the breadth of uncle Adam's dialect; but, on the present occasion, he was more than usually unintelligible; and, as she could neither divine what was meant by fules nor chappin-sticks, she prudently passed them over, and proceeded to business.

"I am come to repay my debt to you," said she, in her sweetest manner; "that is, the pecuniary part of it; but your generous trust and confidence in me I never can repay. My dear uncle, will you accept of my warmest—my most grateful thanks for your kindness?" And she put the money enclosed in a pocket-book of her own embroidering, into his hands, and affectionately pressed them as she did so.

"An' what has that to do wi't?" demanded Mr Ramsay, eyeing the *souvenir* with no gracious aspect.

"That is a pocket-book I have worked on purpose for you; and I hope you will keep it for my sake."

"Weel, I may do sae; though it's nonsense to gie me the like o' thae foolish things;" and, taking out the bill, he carefully wrapt the pocket-book in a piece of paper, and opening an old bureau that stood in the corner of the room, deposited it in a little drawer, then, cautiously locking it, returned to his seat. "Next to no borrowin', the best thing's ready payin', and I'm glad to see you hae that muckle discretion;" and his features gradually relaxed into a more benign expression, as he slowly took out his spectacles to peruse the

bill; when, suddenly resuming their usual stormy cast —"What's this?" cried he; "whar's the interest for my money?"

In great confusion at this unthought-of demand, Gertrude apologised by saying she had been so little accustomed to money transactions, that she had entirely forgot that part of the claim.

"I think it's time you was learnin' something o' the vaala o' money, noo that ye've learnt hoo to spend and to borrow sae readily.—I dinna care ae bodle aboot it for my ain part, but I like to see folk ken what they're aboot, and gie awbody their due;" and taking up an old blackened stump of a pen, he began to cast up his account on the back of the bill; then showing it to Lady Rossville, "There's what I was inteetled to frae you; but I tell you I dinna want it—I only want to mak you sensible o' what you're aboot."

Gertrude acknowledged the justice of his admonition; and having thanked him for it, she was again taken into favour, but it was of short duration.

"Haenae you got your feet wat wi' that snaw?" said he, in a complacent tone—then glancing at her little silk slippers, all his wrath revived. "Bonny-like feet, to be sure, to be wadin' through the snaw! I thought you had mair sense than till hae come oot wi' such daft-like things in such weather—they're liker dancin'-schule pumps than sensible walkin' shoes."

And uncle Adam walked up and down in great discomposure, his own huge leathern buckets creaking at every step.

"I did not know all I had to encounter, else I certainly should have provided better for it," said Gertrude, smiling;—"but I am not at all subject to colds, so don't be alarmed on that account; and when your servant comes in, she will dry my shoes at your kitchen fire."

"You'll sit a while before you see ony servant o' mine—I hae nae servant—and the kitchen fire's black oot."

"No servant, and no fire!" exclaimed Lady Rossville, horror-struck at such an avowal.—"Good Heavens! what a situation! How—what has occasioned this?"

"Just the occasion is, that that impudent thief that's been wi' me these twa year, thought proper to own a marriage wi' a scoondrell o' a dragoon that she ne'er saw till within this month;—and what do you think o' her assurance?—she had the impudence to tell me last night that she would leave my service immediately, unless I wad buy her husband's discharge, tak' him into my service, and settle an annuity on her for life—I daursay there ne'er was the like o't!"

"That was certainly very audacious," said Gertrude—"and she ought, at least, to have remained until you had procured another servant."

"Her remain! do you think I wad left mysel at the discraation o' such a slut as that? I just took her by the shoothers, and gi'ed her the outside o' the door for her answer.—Settle an annuity upon her! I've settled her wi' a vengeance.—Tak' a dragoon into my service! I wad just as soon tak' the hangman into my service!"

"What a picture of lonely old age!" thought Gertrude—"left at the mercy of a mercenary unprincipled servant—destitute even of the necessaries of life—how dismal!"

Even the unfortunate peculiarity of his temper, which kept him aloof from all fellowship with others, she viewed—as, indeed, it was—an additional misfortune, and she felt anxious to alleviate the wretchedness of his state by every means in her power. But to have insinuated to uncle Adam that his comfort at all de-

pended either upon a servant or a fire, would have been an insult he would have resented accordingly.

"You must come to Rossville with me, my dear uncle," said the Countess, taking his hand, with her sweetest look and accent of entreaty.

"Me gang to Rossville!" exclaimed Mr Ramsay, with a sudden start of horror; "I'll do nae such thing —what wad tak' me to Rossville?"

"To pay me a visit—to give me the pleasure of seeing you in my own house. You know you must visit me some time; and this is so good an opportunity, that indeed I will not excuse you."

"I suppose you think I canna contrive to live four-and-twenty hours by mysel'—but you're much mista'en, if you think I depend for my comfort either on man or woman; at ony rate, there's a tyelor and his wife, down by there, very discreet folk, that wad be ready to do ony thing I wanted, so you neednae fash your head aboot me."

"I have no doubt you could have abundance of service," said Lady Rossville, still persisting in her benevolent intentions—"to say nothing of your own domestics at Broom Park—my aunts too—I am sure, if they knew of your situation——"

"My situation!" interrupted Mr Ramsay, sharply. —"What's my situation?—a great situation, to be sure, to hae got rid o' a gude-for-nothing impudent thief that wanted to pick my pocket—I'm only thankful I'm quit o' her—and that's what you ca' my situation —what else could you say if I was lyin' wi' my throat cut?"

"I beg your pardon—but you must make allowance for my blunders—you know my tongue is not so Scotch as my heart, and that is another reason why you must come to Rossville to give me some lessons in my dear native accents—I must now learn to speak Scotch to

my poor people." And Gertrude hung coaxingly round him, till even uncle Adam's flinty nature began to melt.

"What wad ye mak o' me at your braw castell, amang aw your fine folk?—I'm no used to your grandees, and I'm no gawn to begin to learn fashionable mainners noo—so dinna ask me—I'm no gawn to mak a fule o' mysel' at this time o' day."

"I assure you, we have no fine people at Rossville, my dear uncle—not one; and, indeed, I do not like what are called fine people any more than you do. We are a very plain, quiet, old-fashioned family—quite clock-work in our ways and hours; and besides, if you don't like them or us, you shall take your own way in everything—you shall breakfast, dine, sup, if you please, in your own apartment, and be quite at home,—now don't—pray, don't refuse me."

"An' be made a sang o' to aw the hoos, high and low? I suppose it'll be through the toon next that I couldnae mak a shift for a day without that impudent thief, Chirsty Carstairs.—No, no, I'm no gawn to be dragooned out o' my ain hoose by her."

Gertrude was certainly not a persevering character; and, despairing of success, she had risen to depart, when her heart smote her at the thoughts of abandoning the desolate old man to his cheerless solitary state—at his advanced age, and in such inclement weather, to be left in a house alone!—the idea was frightful. Again she returned to the charge, and at length she prevailed; for she held out an inducement uncle Adam was not proof against. She told him of the picture he would see at Rossville of her he had so truly loved, and the right string was touched. A silken thread might have led uncle Adam over half the globe when Lizzie Lundie was paramount. His little preparations were soon made; the tailor's wife was summoned, and

invested with the charge of the mansion; and Mr Ramsay, covered with shame and confusion at his own folly in being thus led by a child, sneaked into the carriage with his head on his breast, and his ears hanging down to his shoulders. Lady Rossville tried to animate him; but he still retained his humble discomfited air, till the carriage stopped at the castle gate, when the old man burst forth—

"I've a gude mind just to gang back the way I cam —auld idiot that I am, to be rinnin' after pickters like a bairn!"

But it was now too late—the movements of the great are commonly conducted with a celerity that baffles all calculation; and uncle Adam was scarcely aware that he had reached his destination ere he found himself in the hall, surrounded by a train of servants. All that was left for him, therefore, was to scowl upon them as he passed along; but they were too well-bred to testify either mirth or surprise at sight of such a phenomenon, and, in spite of himself, he was ushered to the saloon with all the customary demonstrations of respect. It was vacant—and Lady Rossville, having safely deposited him by the side of a blazing fire, and vainly tried to persuade him to partake with her of some refreshment, left him, for a little, to solace himself with the newspapers of the day, while she went to announce his arrival to her mother.

———o———

Chapter Ix.

Listen to me; and if you speak me fair,
I'll tell you news. SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Gertrude had left her mother in the morning she had left her as usual fretful and gloomy—but, on returning, she was struck with the change which, in the course of a few hours, had taken place. Her countenance was lightened—her air was almost joyous; and though some slight traces of agitation were visible, yet it was evidently of no painful kind, for the *tout ensemble* was that of a person who had thrown off a load of cares and of fears. She was seated at her toilette, which, ever since the Earl's death, had been much neglected; but upon her daughter's entrance she dismissed her maid.

"Come away, my love," cried she, holding out her arms, and affectionately embracing her; "I have been tiring to death for you.—Where have you been, my sweetest?"

Gertrude, but not without wondering at this sudden overflow of love and tenderness, related to her the particulars of her visit to Mr Ramsay, and its consequences.

"Ah! nothing could be better managed," said Mrs St Clair; "and his arrival to-day is quite *apropos*, as I mean to make my appearance at dinner, and it may very well pass for a compliment to my good uncle;" then, changing her tone to one of deep solemnity—"Since I saw you in the morning, love, I have been a good deal shocked with a piece of news I accidentally stumbled upon in a provincial paper I happened to take up—my nerves, to be sure, have been sadly shattered of late," and she sighed, and took up her smelling-bottle. "But 'tis impossible not to be struck with such an event.—

Gertrude, you have no longer any thing to fear from that unfortunate man—he—he has perished!" added she, in strong but transient emotion.

Gertrude involuntarily shuddered. There is always something revolting in the gaiety that springs from the death of a fellow-being; and, for a moment, she turned away her head from the wild unnatural pleasure that gleamed in her mother's eye.

"What was this man's life or death to me!" exclaimed she, suddenly. "Surely now the time is come when you will tell me all!"

"Not now, my love—do not urge me—the time may come when I shall have no secret with you; but, at present, it can serve no purpose but that of agitating and distressing you. Perhaps I should not have mentioned this disagreeable occurrence to you at all, but for the fear that it might have come upon you unawares, and so have betrayed you into some symptom of recognition that had better be avoided; for, I think, you could scarcely fail to be struck as I was at reading the account.—As yet, it has got no farther than the Barnford Chronicle; but it will, of course, appear in the London papers, and you will probably hear it read and commented on at all hands, so 'tis better you should receive it from mine—forewarned is forearmed;" and taking up a newspaper, she pointed out a paragraph under the head of "Melancholy Shipwreck." It set forth, in the usual terms, a most elaborate and high-drawn narrative of the wreck of the Dauntless Packet, bound for America, on the coast of Ireland, when every soul on board had perished. Several pieces of the wreck, and some of the bodies of the unhappy sufferers, had been cast on shore, and were all minutely described; amongst others, that of a "gentleman, seemingly turned of thirty years of age—tall—fair complexion—brown hair—black eyes—high nose—linen

marked J. L. On his person were found a watch, a small sum of money, and a pocket-book; the latter containing papers and bills, but so much damaged by the water that the writing was wholly obliterated—only on one of the bills the letters 'S lair' could be traced, and those were the only marks which could throw any light on the unfortunate gentleman's identity," &c. &c. &c.

"It is very sad to be called upon to rejoice over an event fraught with so much misery," said the Countess, with a sigh, as she finished it.

"I do not call upon you to rejoice, Gertrude," said Mrs St Clair, solemnly. "God forbid that I should! I merely wished you to see that you have nothing more to fear in that quarter."

"But, after all, mamma, how can you be quite sure that this ill-fated sufferer is the very person you suppose —Lewiston?"

"Because I have it under his own hand that he had actually engaged his passage in that very vessel; and it is surely very improbable that there should have been two men on board a small packet answering so completely to the same description in every particular; and, even if there were, both must have shared the same fate.—And now let us drop the subject, and everything relating to it. Should it pass without any observation from those two tiresome fools, Lady Betty and Miss Pratt, 'tis well; if it is noticed and commented upon, you will, of course, be prepared to talk about it as any one else would do."

"But Mr Lyndsay?" said Gertrude—"surely you will explain every thing to him?"

"I have already explained enough to Mr Lyndsay," said Mrs St Clair, angrily.—"I know not what more he would require."

"Yet you said you had promised to lay open the whole——"

"But the whole is now at an end; and I do not feel myself called upon to revive old and disagreeable stories, merely to gratify his curiosity."

"In justice to yourself—to me," said Gertrude, urgently, "you ought not to lose a moment in clearing up, if possible, every thing that appears wrong in your conduct and in mine."

"In justice to myself," said Mrs St Clair, colouring with anger, "I will not harrow up my feelings, and endanger my health, by recurring to any thing of a painful or agitating nature at present. Mr Lyndsay, I repeat, knows all that it is necessary for him to know: if he would know more, let him know that the Countess of Rossville, in her own house, and under the protection of her mother, stands in no need either of his advice or assistance."

"No! that he shall never hear from me," said Gertrude, warmly. "Mr Lyndsay may have been duped—he shall never be insulted under my roof, if I can prevent it."

"Is this the language I am now to hear?" cried Mrs St Clair, passionately. "Am I so degraded by your exaltation that I must submit to be stigmatised—and by you? But, beware!—Lewiston is gone, but his power remains." Lady Rossville remained silent, but tears fell from her eyes; at length she said, "I am no longer a child to be frightened by a bugbear—either tell me who this person really was, and what power he possessed over me, or, if you refuse to gratify me in this, at least let his name be no more mentioned between us. Already," cried she, giving scope to her emotion, and speaking under its excitement—"already my feelings have been sacrificed—my reputation endangered—certainly sullied in the eyes of one person; and yet to him you refuse that explanation which is due both to him and to me."

While her daughter spoke, Mrs St Clair seemed to be struggling with her passions—at length, by a violent effort, she obtained the mastery over them, and, in a feeble languid tone, said—

"I am unable to contend with you, Gertrude; you are mistress here, and may command, it seems, even your mother to obey you;—but, exhausted as I am by a long and dangerous illness,—my nerves shattered—my mind unstrung,—you might have spared me yet a little——But why should you weep, Lady Rossville,—you who have all that this world can bestow? Methinks you might, at least, have left tears for your mother—poor dependant—humble as she is! Gertrude, I am in no situation to oppose your will—with a worn-out frame—broken spirits—depending on your bounty for my daily bread——"

Accustomed as she had all her life been to her mother's acting, still Gertrude never could hear a reproach from her lips without the bitterest sorrow and compunction; and, on the present occasion, every word went as a dagger to her heart. Her attention had artfully been led away from the point at issue, and now she only beheld herself as the oppressor of a mother, feeble, old, and poor.

With her usual impetuosity, she at once flung herself into her mother's power—sued for forgiveness; and the scene ended, as such scenes always did end, in Mrs St Clair's victory. Still she felt it was but a temporary one, as a mere triumph over the feelings always is. There might be silence,—but there was no submission at heart, for there could be no conviction of mind. Such as it was, however, it served for the present—a hasty reconciliation was patched up, on a sort of mutual understanding that all relating to the unfortunate Lewiston was to be consigned to oblivion. Mrs St Clair was not to be urged to any explanation till

she should see fit to make it—and Lady Rossville was never more to be offended with the mention of a name connected, as it was, in her ideas, with so much degradation. Mrs St Clair then rung for her maid to resume her office, and the Countess returned to the saloon to her guest.

—o—

Chapter lxj.

Mes yeux sont trop blessés, et la cour et la ville
Ne m'offrent rien qu' objets à m'echauffer la bile ;
J'entre en une humeur noire, en un chagrin profond,
Quand je vois vivre entre eux les hommes comme ils font ;
Je n'y puis plus tenir, j'enrage ; et mon dessein
Est de rompre en visiere à tout le genre humain.

MOLIERE.

UPON entering the apartment, Gertrude's surprise was great at finding Mr Ramsay and Miss Pratt seated together, seemingly in a most harmonious *tête-à-tête*. She had anticipated almost with dread a meeting between two such opposite natures, and had expected something to result from it little less discordant than the union of a bagpipe and fiddle; instead of which, she found their tastes and sentiments completely blended into one beauteous whole, and the current of their conversation gliding on so smoothly that it did not seem even to require Cowper's animated

. . . . . No—
To brush the surface, and to make it flow.

But the extraordinary conjunction of two such distant planets is easily accounted for. It was not brought about by any heavenly influences, for such were not the tests for their spirits—but simply by means of a sufficient quantity of well-expressed, well-applied abuse,

which is perhaps the strongest of all cements for worldly minds.

Uncle Adam, it is already known, had been left like one of the fortunate adventurers in the Arabian Tales, in a luxurious apartment, surrounded—not with singing damsels, and silver tissue, and sherbet, 'tis true —but with what to him were far greater enjoyments—silence, and freedom, and a newspaper. Perhaps another in his place would have taken a survey of the room, or have pondered a little over his comforts; but he was none of these—he was quite unconscious of the finery that surrounded him, and not at all aware of the difference between the crimson and gold damask *fauteuil* in which he was seated and his own little strait-backed hair-cloth one—neither was he at all struck with the contrast between the profusion of lamps which diffused their brilliant light and his long-wicked, dim, streaming tallow candles. The bright blooming fire, indeed, was too powerful an object to be overlooked; but that only drew forth a peevish exclamation as he pushed back from its overpowering influence, and sought for his spectacles to see how stood the stocks. But no spectacles were to be found! Every pocket (and they were not a few) was searched, and its depths profound explored—but in vain; the case—the shagreen case was there, as if only to mock his hopes, for it was empty; and uncle Adam at length recollected, with infinite vexation, that he had left its precious contents on the little table in his own parlour. How tormenting to behold with the mind's eye the very object we are in search of, lying on a particular spot, where our own hands have placed it!—to see it, as it were, within our grasp, and yet to be in torments for the want of it! Such as have experienced this will sympathise in the sufferings of uncle Adam, as he saw his spectacles lying afar off upon their broad end—their

arms extended as if to grasp his temples—while yet the spectacles saw not him!

"I deserve this for my folly in comin' to such a place!" was his mental ejaculation, as he shuffled away to a window to see whether it was not yet too dark for him to find his way home to his own house and his spectacles. But, at that critical moment, the door opened; and Miss Pratt, like another Fairy Paribanon, entered. She had discovered his arrival; and having had the advantage of hearing his character and peculiarities thoroughly discussed upon various occasions, she was prepared to meet him accordingly.

Miss Pratt, like many other people, had a sort of instinctive reverence for riches, even where she had not the slightest prospect of profiting by them. She, therefore, accosted Mr Ramsay with the greatest respect and courtesy—expressed the pleasure it gave her to see him at Rossville—hoped he had taken something since he came—it wanted a long while to dinner yet—and, in short, did the honours as though she had been mistress of the mansion.

Uncle Adam, who knew not who he had to deal with, was not displeased at the *empressement* testified in his behalf by a stranger, and he declined the proffered civility in his politest manner—adding, that he never took any thing between breakfast and dinner.

"And an excellent rule it is," said Miss Pratt, in her most emphatic tone, "for them who can keep it; for I really think there's a great deal too much eating and drinking goes on in the present day, especially amongst young people. The consequence is, you hear of nothing but bile—bile—bile, from the oldest to the youngest. I really think poor Lord Rossville hurt himself very much by his manner of eating—not but what he was a moderate man in the main—but, to tell the truth, I never can help thinking he dealt too deep

in a fine fat venison pasty that was at dinner, the very last day he sat at his own table; and such a supper as he ate that night, poor man!"

"I dinna doot it," said Mr Ramsay, secure that he never would come to an untimely end by any excesses of the kind.

"I've given our young Countess a hint about that," resumed Miss Pratt; "for I really think there's need for a little reform in the kitchen here. It was just yesterday I was saying to her, that, for all the cooks she had, and for all the grand things they send up, I didn't believe she had one that could make a drop good plain barley-broth, or knew how to manage a sheep's head and trotters.—She laughed, and desired Phillips, the *maître de hotel*, to be sure to have one Scotch dish on the table every day; but I've no great brew of any Scotch dish that'll ever come out of the hands of a French cook."

"There'll be nae want o' a fire to cook the dinner, I'm sure," said uncle Adam, pointing to the well-filled chimney; "there's a fire might roast an ox. There's no possibility o' going near it."

"I'm sure that's true; for I'm quite o' your opinion, Mr Ramsay, as the old byeword says, 'better a wee ingle to warm ye, than a muckle fire to burn you.' It's really a sin to see such fires; and it's all the same way, every room in the house blazing with fires and lamps, till, I declare, my eyes are like to be put out o' my head; but Lady Rossville's so fond of light, she never can get enough of it—and her eyes are young and strong; but she'll maybe feel the frost of it yet, when she comes to know the value of them like you and me, sir."

Miss Pratt was quite conscious that her stout, active, indefatigable eyes were not to be mentioned in the same breath with Mr Ramsay's little, weak, pale, bleared

ones; but when people are resolved to please, they must sometimes make great sacrifices. The compliment was not wholly thrown away, though it was not returned in kind; for, with one of his vinegar smiles, uncle Adam replied—

"I set mair value upon my spectacles than my een noo, for I find the ane o' very little use to me wanting the ither; but I've forgotten my glasses in my ain hoose, and I canna read ae word o' thae papers that she put into my hands!"

"That *is* really a hard case!" exclaimed Miss Pratt, with the most ardent expression of sympathy; "but I'll tell you what, Mr Ramsay, you need be at no loss for spectacles in this house, for poor Lord Rossville, I'm sure, if he left one pair, he left a score —always changing his glasses! I really think he hurt his sight very much by it—I would get you a pair in an instant, but Lady Rossville has the keys of all his places, and she's with her mother just now, so perhaps you'll wait till she comes out; but if you'll give me leave, I'll read the papers to you, for I haven't seen them myself yet—somebody or other whipt them out of the room this morning, before I had time to look at them—I suspect some of the servants, for they are really getting out their horns at no allowance. Lady Rossville stands much in need of some experienced judicious friend to take some management, for they're really going off at the nail. I do *not* know what servants are to come to, for my part; the'll be no living with them by and by. I have but one; and what do you think, sir, of the trick she played me the t'other day? It's but seldom I leave my own house, for I'm one of those who think there's no place like home, but you know one must give up their own way sometimes; and I had been away upon a visit, and came home one dreadful night very wearied and far from well—had

been just comforting myself all the way with the thoughts of a cup of warm tea and getting into my own bed, when, instead of that, lo and behold! I found my house shut up—my key nobody knew where—and my fine madam off on some junketting match! The consequence was, I must have lain in the street, if your worthy nieces, the Miss Blacks, hadn't accidentally heard of the situation I was in, and made a point of my coming to them—and after all this, I'm obliged to keep her for six months, or pay her wages and board wages!"

All this was oil and honey to uncle Adam's wounds; and Chirsty Carstairs' enormities, great as they were, looked somewhat smaller beside the still more monstrous offence of Babby Broadfoot. He had had the satisfaction of turning the delinquent out of his doors, instead of having endured the humiliation of being locked out by her; consequently, whatever similarity there might be in their injuries, still he stood upon higher ground, and he gave a faint chuckle of delight at finding his new friend's misfortune so much worse than his own.

Miss Pratt now turned to the newspaper.—"I'm just taking a glance of the stocks; for though it's but little I have to do with them, still, you know, 'we all bow to the bush we get bield frae.'—Ay! there's another tumble, I see, down to 80 and a fraction—rose to 80⅜—some done so high as 81¼—left off, at the close, at 80½.

"That's the 3 per cents.—and what are India bonds?" asked Mr Ramsay.

"India bonds, 61 to 63 premium—long annuities shut, short ditto," &c. &c. &c. And Miss Pratt, in the twinkling of an eye, ran through the whole range of the money-market, displaying, in her career, the most complete knowledge of each and every branch,

as though she had been born and bred a stock-jobber.

Uncle Adam was astonished! He had read of women ascending to the skies in balloons, and descending to the depths of the sea in bells; but for a woman to have entered the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Stock Exchange, and to know, to a fraction, the difference between 3 per cents. red. and 3 per cents. acc.—and to be mistress of all the dread mysteries of scrip and omnium!—it was what uncle Adam in all his philosophy never had dreamed of, and Miss Pratt rose at least 5 per cent. in his estimation.

Having discussed the stocks in all their bearings, she proceeded with the varied contents of the paper; but the fall of the 3 per cents. had not sweetened her temper, and she was very bitter in her indignation at "Proposals for publishing, by subscription, a Print of the Reverend Peter Pirie, proofs 2*l.* 2s." &c.; and at the announcement that the lady of a "Lieutenant Duncan Dow, late of his Majesty's 119th Regiment," had presented him with a son and heir. But the whole measure of her wrath was reserved for the obituary record, which, as usual, contained the apotheosis of some, it may be, very worthy, but certainly very insignificant individual, as in the present instance.

"Died, at the house of his father, No. 2, East Cotton Row, where he had gone for the recovery of his health, on the 13th ult., aged 45, Nathaniel Lamb, Esq., hosier and glover, after a long and lingering illness, which he bore with the most heroic patience and Christian resignation. To the purest benevolence, the most enlightened piety, and the most devoted patriotism, Mr Lamb, junior, united the firmest principles, the most perfect integrity, and the most affable address——"

Here uncle Adam broke out with—"Affable address!

the affability o' a hosier! I never could bear that word aw my days, and far less noo—dinna read ony mair, ma'am.—Affable! affable! I wonder wha wad tak affability aff the hands o' a glover!—but it's just o' a piece wi' awthing else in this world now. Half-pay lieutenants maun hae leddies and heirs—and bodies o' schule-maisters and ministers maun sit for their pickters, and hae their faces printed as though they war kings and conquerors. The newspapers are filled wi' the lives o' folk that naebody ever heard o' till they war' dead—I dinna ken what things are to come to!"

"Indeed, sir, that's my wonder, for I really think the world has been turned fairly topsy-turvy since our days; but I assure you it would be well if people were satisfied with putting their deaths in the papers. What do you think, sir, of having to pay, as I had the t'other day, thirteen-pence halfpenny for a notification of the death of a woman that wasn't a drop's blood to me—just thirteen-pence halfpenny out of my hand, and that for a person that, to tell the truth, I thought had been dead twenty years ago."

This was another nut for uncle Adam, who had long brooded over the mortification of having had to pay a penny for a similar compliment, and even thought how he should obtain redress, or at least revenge. Miss Pratt went on—

"As Anthony Whyte (my nephew, Mr Whyte of Whyte Hall) says, 'I've given orders to take in no letters from the post-office now with black seals—they're either disagreeable or expensive, and sometimes both.'"

"It's a very sensible regulation," said uncle Adam, warmly.

"And as for burial letters—what do you think, sir, of Anthony Whyte being asked to three burials in one week—and two of them people he had never broke bread with?"

"I think a man had better be a saullie * at once," said Mr Ramsay, vehemently.

But here the colloquy of these two congenial souls was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Rossville.

"That's an ooncommon sensible woman," said uncle Adam, as his friend and ally pattered away to the other end of the room for a fire-screen for the Countess.

"I really am agreeably surprised with your uncle," whispered Miss Pratt, as she drew Lady Rossville a little aside; "a fine shrewd old man—I assure you, he knows odds from ends; it's not every body that will do with him—he puts you to your trumps in a hurry."

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Chapter lxij.

If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them.—Lord Bacon.

GERTRUDE watched with some solicitude the meeting between her mother and Mr Lyndsay, as she entered the drawing-room before dinner, leaning on her arm in all the parade of convalescence. When he came up to offer his congratulations, her cheek was slightly suffused, and for a moment her eye fell beneath the mild yet searching expression of his. But quickly regaining her self-possession, she replied to his salutation in that distant ceremonious manner which plainly indicated the sort of footing they were henceforth to be upon. Mr Lyndsay had too much tact not to feel what was implied; and the inference he drew was, that he must now cease to expect any explanation

* A hired mourner.

from her as to the past. The Earl's death had deprived him of the only hold he had over her, for there was no one now who had a right to interpose their authority. Averse as he was to interference in general, yet upon this occasion he considered himself called upon to act a decided part, and he resolved to take the first opportunity of coming to an understanding with Mrs St Clair on the subject of the mysterious interviews.

Lady Rossville felt that some apology was due to her cousin for the introduction of so uncouth a companion as uncle Adam; and she hastened to explain to him the cause of his becoming her guest, and to request that he might not consider him as any tax upon his politeness, or think it incumbent upon him to entertain a person who, she assured him, despised entertainment in every shape.

But Lyndsay was not one of those fastidious beings who can only tolerate the chosen few, whose endowments place them at least on a level with themselves. Although the gulf was wide which separated Mr Ramsay and him in mind and manners, yet he did not disdain all fellowship with him, but welcomed the old man with that politeness which, when it springs from benevolence, can never fail to please; and, at the same time, with that ease and simplicity, which, of all modes of expression, are, without doubt, the most attractive. Although quite alive to the peculiarities of his new associate, and not a little amused with many of them, yet his better feelings always prevailed over his sense of ridicule; and instead of "giving play" to uncle Adam's foibles, he led the conversation to such objects as were best calculated to show him to advantage.

It is only well-informed people who are capable of extracting information from others. We require to know something of a subject ourselves before we can even question others to any purpose upon it; and, per-

haps, it often happens that our own ignorance is in fault, when we throw the blame upon other people's stupidity. Such was not Edward Lyndsay's case; and while he unconsciously displayed his own knowledge even in seeking information, he drew forth the hidden stores of Mr Ramsay, and rendered him almost an instructive and an entertaining companion.

Uncle Adam was no Othello; but still, in the course of his long life, he had met with his "disastrous chances," his "moving accidents," his "hair-breadth 'scapes," and had traversed many an "antre vast and desert idle;" and though he would have disdained any thing like a regular detail of aught he had ever seen or met with, yet, by judicious management, a great deal could be extracted from him in his own homely manner.

Meanwhile Miss Pratt's cloven foot began to display itself to his piercing ken. Vague notions at first floated through his brain about her, but they were such as only wanted a little more time and opportunity to body forth into real shapes. He had a notion that she spoke too much—that she took too much upon her—that she tasted of too many different dishes, instead of dining upon one thing, which was one of his cardinal virtues—then, it was not her business to press him to eat in his own niece's house, where he felt he had a better right to eat and to speak than she had. But the head and front of her offending was her asking him to drink a glass of Madeira with her during dinner—that was a piece of assurance he could not away with. In his time, it used to be a serious and solemn thing for a gentleman to invite a lady to drink wine with him; but here was a total *bouleversement* of the natural order of things, and uncle Adam actually blushed an acceptance as he wondered what was to come next. To counterbalance these improprieties, she had, in the

twinkling of an eye, suited him in a pair of spectacles, which seemed as though they had been made for him, or he for them—she had bespoke a haggis for dinner the following day, and undertaken to direct Monsieur Morelle in the art of stuffing it—then she lost seven games at backgammon, for which she paid down three and sixpence, with very evident reluctance too, which always serves to enhance the value of the winnings tenfold; so that, upon the whole, uncle Adam was rather inclined for once to suspend his judgment, and, instead of decidedly condemning her, he merely began to look upon her as a sort of doubtful character.

Lady Rossville had ordered an apartment for her uncle, communicating with the yellow turret, which contained the goddess of his idolatry, and which she intended should henceforth be his *sanctum sanctorum*. She, therefore, introduced him to it the following day; but that he might feel more at liberty to indulge his soft emotions, she was retiring, when looking round, he called to her—

"But whar's the pickter you promised me?"

"There," said Gertrude, pointing to the Diana.

"That!" exclaimed he, in a tone of surprise and indignation. "*That* Lizzie Lundie! they're no blate that evens her to it!" And he walked round and round the turret, something in the manner of an obstreperous horse in a mill.

"This is very strange," said Gertrude—"both Lord Rossville and Miss Pratt seemed to know the history of this picture so perfectly, that I never imagined there could be a doubt about it; I am really sorry that you have been so disappointed."

"Disappointed!" repeated uncle Adam, stopping short, and looking almost black with wrath,—"I'm mair than disappointed—I'm perfectly disgusted!" Then taking another look—"Lizzie Lundie was

a daacent, wise-like, sensible craater, as ever lived—and to compare her to that brazen-faced tawpie, wi' a moon upon her head, and a great bow and arrow in her hand!"

And again he turned away in increasing animosity against the Diana.

"But, my dear uncle, these are merely adventitious embellishments—you see she is represented in the character of Diana——"

"And what business had they to represent her as ony such thing?"

This was a question Lady Rossville was aware she could not answer to his satisfaction, therefore prudently waived it by asking another.

"So, then, you don't discover any resemblance?"

"Resemblance!—Hoo is't possible there can be ony resemblance? Wha ever saw *her* in that madlike unnatural condition, mair like a stage actress than an honest man's dochter!—you might just as well set me up for a—a—an Apollo!"

The idea of uncle Adam, with his long cross blue face and pyramidical peruke, personating the God of Day, diverted Lady Rossville so much, that she laughed outright; but he retained his inflexible severity of countenance, and seemed quite unconscious of the ridicule of such a supposition.

"Well, since you don't like the picture, you shall not be offended by it again," said the Countess, laying her hand gently on his arm to lead him from the place; "you shall have another dressing-room to your apartment, and you have only to forget the way to this one."

But uncle Adam now fixed himself opposite to the huntress queen, and, having carefully wiped and adjusted his spectacles, he contemplated her for some time without speaking; at length, with a groan, he said,—

"I'll no say but what there may be something o' a likeness in the face, when you come to consider it—there's the brow, the bonny brent brow——" Then, kindling anew—"But wha e'er saw her brow wi' that senseless-like thing on the tap o't? They could nae pent her een, to be sure, for they might as weel hae tried to pent twa diamonds—the bit mouth's no entirely unlike, but it has nae her bonny smile." And uncle Adam gazed and commented, till he gradually lost sight of the moon and the bow, and all the offensive peculiarities of the sylvan goddess, and at length saw only the image of his long-loved Lizzie.

From that time the turret became his favourite haunt; and as he was there perfectly unmolested, and was left at liberty to follow his own devices, secure from even the interruptions of Miss Pratt, he remained tolerably quiescent. Every day, indeed, he made an attempt to break off, and return to his own comfortless abode; but every day he was overruled by Lady Rossville, whose influence over him was daily increasing, although he was perfectly unconscious of it, and would have spurned the idea of being influenced by any thing but his own free will. But there was also another inducement for him to prolong his stay, which he would have been still more ashamed to have acknowledged.

In a paroxysm of *ennui* one bad day he had taken up the first volume of Guy Mannering, with little expectation of deriving either amusement or instruction from it; but, once fairly entered upon it, he found himself compelled, *nolens volens*, to proceed; which he did, however, in the most secret and stealthy manner. Uncle Adam had been no novel-reader even in his younger days; and with him, as with many other excellent, but we must suppose mistaken people, novels

and mental imbecility were ideas inseparably united in his brain. Novel-writers he had always conceived to be born idiots, and novel-readers he considered a something still lower in the scale of intellect. It was, therefore, with feelings of the deepest humiliation he found himself thus irresistibly carried along on a sort of *King's-cushion*, as it were, by Meg Merrilies and Dominie Sampson. Not that he traversed the pages with the swiftness of a modern reader—or that he read them probably with half the rapidity with which they were written—for he was one of those solid, substantial readers who make what they read their own—he read and re-read, and paused and pondered—and often turned back, but never looked forward, even while experiencing the most intense anxiety as to the result—in short, uncle Adam's whole being was completely absorbed in this (to him) new creation; while, at the same time, he blushed even in private at his own weakness in filling his head with such idle havers, and, indeed, never could have held it up again if he had been detected with a volume in his hand.

—o—

Chapter xxij.

Oh! scene of fortune, which dost fair appear
Only to men that stand not near!

COWLEY.

O why should Fate sic pleasure take
Life's dearest bands untwining?
Or why sae sweet a flower as Love
Depend on Fortune shining?

BURNS.

AND now visions of earthly bliss—of pomp—of power—of pleasure,—began to float before those eyes scarce dried from natural tears. But Gertrude had not now so much time as formerly

to indulge in the idle day-dreams of romance. With her change of situation, the penalties of greatness came thronging upon her. Unthought-of claims upon her time—her talents—her attention, followed in rapid and never-ceasing succession; and she found, with surprise and disappointment, that the boundless freedom she had so fondly anticipated as the attribute of power was farther from her than ever. To *will*, indeed, was here; but how many obstacles intervene to the accomplishing of the will, even of the most absolute!—obstacles which conscience itself raises as barriers against the encroachments of self-indulgence and natural inclination; and which, though as thin air to some, are as rocks of adamant to others. But Lady Rossville possessed a more powerful monitor than even conscience would have proved in the person of Edward Lyndsay. "*Une femme est aisée a gouverner*," says a French satirist, "*pourvu que ce soit un homme qui s'en donne la peine;*"—and the truth of the assertion Gertrude seemed in a fair way to realise. Ardent and enthusiastic in her nature, and as such always prone to fall into extremes, the sense of dependence she felt towards her cousin, as the only person on whose judgment and rectitude she could safely rely, would gradually have assumed the habit of implicit deference to most of his views and opinions; not from conviction—for on many subjects they widely differed—but simply because, like many other people, she loved to be directed in matters where her affections were not concerned, and was always ready to sacrifice her judgment, provided it did not interfere with her inclination. There is, indeed, much of luxury to an indolent, or a fanciful mind, in thus casting its cares upon another, while it floats calmly along in undisturbed serenity, or abandons itself to the thick-coming fancies of its own imagination. In every situation of life this disposition,

alas! has its dangers; but how much more in those gifted ones whom God has set on the high places of the earth! But Mr Lyndsay was not a person to take advantage of this flexible form of mind. He had too much delicacy to assume any authority, or interfere in any department openly—too much honour to use his influence in an indirect or underhand manner. He aimed to guide her principles, not to direct her actions—to strengthen her mind, not to govern it; but, above all, he strove to impress upon her the responsibility of the duties assigned her—the account which would one day be required of the talents committed to her. But such doctrine, even though uttered in the mildest and most persuasive accents, still sounded harsh to ears just opening to the blandishments of the world. Imagination had stretched a broad and flowery path in endless perspective before her, and she recoiled from that strait and narrow way which the Christian pilgrim has been commanded to tread. Life—young life's enchanting scenes were now bursting on the sight in all their exquisite, but transient, delusive beauty; and at that joyous season, when "the common air, the earth, the skies," seem to the exulting heart to breathe of "opening Paradise," how does it turn from the holy precepts—the solemn admonitions of Divine truth—as from that which would annihilate all that is delightful in existence!

So felt the child of prosperity, as she looked on all the pride of life, and, with the fallen cherub, was ready to exclaim—

O Earth, how like to Heaven, if not preferr'd!

But with all her faults—and they were many—Gertrude was not one of those selfish, sordid spirits, whose enjoyments centre solely in their own gratification. Her nature was lofty, and her disposition generous; but

her virtue was impulse—her generosity profusion. She wished to diffuse happiness around her; and she imagined she had only to scatter money with a lavish hand, and it would necessarily spring up, bearing the fruits of peace, and love, and virtue, and joy. Like all enthusiastic novices, her schemes of philanthropy—if schemes they might be called which plan had none—were upon the most magnificent scale; and it was with mortification she beheld her baseless fabrics melt away beneath the plain practical results of Mr Lyndsay's rational benevolence. Schools were the only establishments for which she could obtain his concurrence, and even there she thought his ideas much too humble. A plain school-house was an odious, frightful thing—she must positively have it elegant, if not expensive; and the children must be all prettily dressed;—and she drew a design for the building, and invented a uniform for the children, both so classical and so *unique*, that she was all impatience to behold these models of her taste and fancy realised.

There was another object which Gertrude was still more anxious to accomplish, and that was to make the happiness of William Leslie and Anne Black, by providing him with a church. But the one for which her cousin had applied had been given away by Lord Rossville, and there was no immediate prospect of another vacancy occurring. Even Mr Lyndsay could not assist her here, for his interest was already deeply engaged; but he was little less desirous than herself of befriending a young man, whose amiable character, evangelical doctrine, mild attractive manners, and exemplary conduct, were more powerful recommendations than aught that rank and beauty could have urged.

Matters were in this state, when Anne accompanied her father and mother one day on a visit of condolence to Rossville. While Miss Pratt, as usual, did the

honours of the mansion to the seniors of the party, Lady Rossville took her cousin apart to converse with her on the subject; for, although too modest and diffident to make a direct application, there was an anxious appeal in her pensive countenance that could not be misunderstood. She at once frankly owned that the cause of her dejection proceeded from the apparent hopelessness of her prospects.

"But is the want of a church really the only obstacle to your union?" inquired Gertrude.

"Alas, no!" said her cousin mournfully; "my father and mother, and indeed my whole family, oppose it now more than ever, because of the superior establishments my sisters have got; and they talk of the degradation I am bringing upon them all by such a poor connection, till I am sometimes ready to give it up in despair—and so I would, were it only my own happiness that is at stake—*that* I would willingly sacrifice to theirs—but William loves me so truly, and has loved me so long—ever since we were children—and to give him up now, I am sure would break both our hearts." Here Anne "dropt some natural tears, but wiped them soon," and, in a firmer tone, added—"But I am wrong—very wrong, to give way to such desponding thoughts—if it is God's will, we shall yet be happy in His good time—and if He sees good to disappoint us, I trust we shall both be able from our hearts to say, His will be done!"

Gertrude was for an instant smote with the difference of her cousin's sentiments from her own—her meek submission, her humble acquiescence, seemed as a reproach to the wayward feelings of her own rebellious heart; but quickly she dispelled the gathering conviction—"She cannot love as I do," thought she, "or she could not reason thus—hers may be virtue, but it is not love."

Chapter lxiv.

Thy house and pleasing wife!

HORACE.

THE snow had now disappeared—the waters had subsided—the air was soft for the season—the cloudy welkin had cleared up into a fleecy dappled sky, and sanguine spirits deemed that winter was past and gone. For, in the quaint words of Cuddy, in the Shepherd's Calendar,

> When the shining sun laugheth once,
> You deemen the spring is come at once.

Even the faintest breath of spring brings pleasure to all whose hearts are not seared, and whose bodies are not iron. We feel as if we were about to renew our existence—the opening skies seem to smile upon us as they did in the days of our youth, and again their bland influence steals upon our senses. Again we cast away the cares and the griefs of the world, with its clouds and its storms; and again spring up in our numbed hearts,

> Hopes that are angels in their birth,
> But perish young, like things of earth!

But it is not every one who owns such influences. Amongst the inmates of Rossville Castle a fine day produced its pleasures, but they were of a different nature. Mrs St Clair liked it, that she might take an airing in state; and, accordingly, set forth in all the pomp of a stately equipage. Lady Betty liked the sun, because it would shine upon fat Flora, who was sent out to profit by it. Miss Pratt, having rummaged every creek and cranny in the interior of the house, took advantage of it to look about her a little without doors,

to see what abuses she could detect. Uncle Adam, having seen Dandie Dinmont and Dumple safe home, closed his book, and crept away with his hands behind his back to take a saunter. Lady Rossville, taking Mr Lyndsay's arm, set out, as she had done on many a worse day, to mark the progress of the improvements she had begun—to accelerate, if possible, by her impatience, the building of her school-house, and to visit some of the cottages of her poor, with whose ways and wants she was now beginning to make herself acquainted.

Her romantic expectation of finding elegant distress in mud cabins was now gradually dwindling away; for wherever she went, she met only the homeliness of matter-of-fact poverty.

Gratitude, and respect, and blessings, indeed, were hers; for how easy is it for the great to make themselves beloved by the poor—how cheap the purchase of the best feelings of humanity! Gertrude was new to the luxury of doing good; and her heart would swell, and her eyes fill with tears, as the trembling hand of age was raised to Heaven to call down its blessings on her head—and she could look, almost with pleasure, on the children her bounty had clothed, even though their features were coarse, and their dialect uncouth.

In the course of her domiciliary visits, she found herself at the door of the cottage she had visited the memorable morning after her arrival at Rossville; and, somewhat curious to know the state of affairs there, she was about to enter, when, at that moment, uncle Adam was descried approaching. They waited till he came up, and then invited him to join in the visit, which, after a little humming and hawing, he agreed to do.

The door was hard and fast shut; but, upon knocking, it was banged open by our *ci-devant* friend, the

dame of the stoups, who immediately recognised and most cordially welcomed her former visitor.

"Eh! my leddy, is this you?—I ax your pardon, my leddy, but I really didna ken weel wha you was the first time you was here—just come foret, my leddy —just stap in ower, sir,—dinna be feared, my leddy, just gang in bye," &c. &c. &c.; and carefully closing the door against the breath of heaven, she ushered her guests into the dark precincts of her foul-aired smoky cabin. A press-bed, with a bit of blue checked stuff hanging down, denoted that the poor sufferer had now exchanged his seat by the fire for his bed; and the chair which he had formerly occupied stood with its back to the fire, covered with linens, apparently drying.

"How does your husband do?" inquired Lady Rossville.

"Oo, 'deed, my leddy, he's just quite silly-wise," responded the dame, in a whining melancholy key; "he just lies there snottering awa'," pointing to the bed.

"Is he confined to bed?" asked Mr Lyndsay.

"No—no, sir, he's no confined ony ways—he gets up whiles, but 'deed it's no aye convenient for me to hae him up; for, as I tell him, what can he do when he *is* up?—for he's no fit to put his hand to ony thing —and he's mair out o' the way there than he wad be ony place else."

"More out of the way of regaining health certainly," said Mr Lyndsay.

"Health, sir!" interrupted the hostess; "'deed he'll ne'er hae health as lang as he lives—he's just been draggle dragglen on these twunty month by Martimas —I'm sure I've had a weary time o't wi' him, and noo I canna get a hand's turn maist done for him—the hoose an' aw things just gawin' to destruction; and, I'm sure, I really think shame o' mysel'," surveying

two large dirty arms from top to toe; "and there's the weans, puir things, gawin' in perfect rags, for I ne'er can get a steek put in either to their duds or my ain."

Here the voice of the sick man was heard in a faint accent, calling the gudewife.

"That's just the way he gangs on, my leddy—he just lies there and yelps—yelps—yelps even on for me.—What is't noo?" in her loudest sharpest key, as she banged up to the bed. "A drink? I wonder ye hae nae mair sense, Tam, than to ask for a drink the noo, when her leddyship's here, an' Maister Lyndsay an' aw, speerin' for you."

Lyndsay here took up a jug of water, which was standing on the top of a chest by the bed-side, and held it to the sick man's lips; but the reproof was thrown away, or rather misconstrued, by his soothing helpmate.

"Oh, sir! I think shame o' your takin' sae muckle trouble—for he's just like a bairn—he's aye wantin' something or anither, and he's just lost aw discretion thegither—I wonder you dinna think shame o' yoursel'" (to her husband) "when you see the fashery you mak'."

Mr Lyndsay, meanwhile, having felt the invalid's pulse, began to put a few queries to him touching his complaint.

"Have you much thirst?" asked he.

"O, sir, he wad drink the very ocean, an let him."

"Pray, let him speak for himself," said Lyndsay, again putting the question to the patient, who seemed so unused to the privilege that he was evidently at a loss how to make use of it.

"Have you any pain in your head?"

"'Deed, sir, I dinna think he has muckle pain in his head, though he compleens o't whiles; but, as I often tell him, I wiss he had my back. I'm sure I've

a pain whiles atween my shouthers, sir——" rolling a huge, fat, strong-looking back, as she spoke.

"I shall attend to your pains some other time, if you will be so good as keep them quiet for the present," said Lyndsay; then, once more turning to the sick man, he asked whether he had pain or weakness in his limbs that prevented him from rising.

"I'm sure I dinna ken what it is," again interposed the incorrigible matron. "He canna be sair, I'm positive o' that; he's very silly,* to be sure, but that canna be helpit, ye ken."

"Do you never allow your husband to answer for himself?" asked Mr Lyndsay, at a loss whether to laugh or be provoked at this intolerable woman.

"Oo, sir, I'm sure he's walcome to speak for me; but 'tweel I dinna think he kens very weel what till say, or what it is that ails him.—Tam,"—shouting into his ear—"the leddy wants to hear an you can speak ony. Canna you thank her for the braw claise an siller she gied you?"

"Should not you like to be up—out of bed?" asked Gertrude, now trying her skill to extract an answer; but before he had time to reply, his mouth-piece again took up the word.

"Up, my leddy! 'Deed he just craik craiks to be up, and then whan he's up he craik craiks to be doun; an' it wad be very disconvenient for to hae him up the day, for you see,"—pointing to the linens that were spread over the chairs,—"the fire's aw ta'en up wi' his dead-claise, that I was gi'en an air to; for they had got unco dampish-wise wi' the wat wather; an' I'm thinkin' he'll no be lang o' wantin' them noo; and this is siccan a bonny day, I thought what atween the

* Silly—in England meant to express mental imbecility; in Scotland, signifies bodily weakness.

fire and the sun they wad be sure to get a gude toast." *

Uncle Adam had hitherto practised a degree of forbearance which had scarcely a parallel in his whole life and conversation; but, indeed, from the moment the dame had first opened her lips, he had felt that words would be weak weapons to have recourse to, and that nothing less than smiting could at all satisfy his outraged feelings. Luckily, at this moment, she was not within reach of his arm, otherwise it is to be feared his wrath would have vented itself, not in thin air, but in solid blows. As it was, he at last burst forth, like a volcano, with—

"Airing the honest man's dead-claise, when the breath's in his body yet! Ye're bauld to treat a living man as ye wad a sweel'd corpse, and turn his very hoose into a kirk-yard! How dare ye set up your face to keep him frae his ain fireside for ony o' your dead duds?"

And snatching up the paraphernalia so ostentatiously displayed, he thrust the whole into the fire.—"There—that'll gie them a gude toast for you!" said he; and as they broke into a blaze he quitted the cabin.

"Eh, sirs! the bonny claise, that cost sae muckle siller!" sobbed the mistress, in an hysterical tone, as she made an ineffectual effort to save them;—"the ill-faur'd carle that he is, to tak upon him for to set low to ony honest man's windin'-sheet!"

Lady Rossville was confounded; for, as she but imperfectly comprehended the pith of the parley that had taken place, the action appeared to her, as indeed it was, perfectly outrageous, and her purse was instantly opened to repair this breach of law and justice. But Lyndsay could scarcely keep from laughing at the tragi-comic scene that had just taken place. From his

* From real life.

knowledge of the character and modes of thinking of the Scottish peasantry, he was not at all surprised at the gudewife's preparations;—but while she was engrossed with her attempts to redeem some bits of the linen from the flames, he took the opportunity of carrying on his colloquy with the husband.

"So I see your wife does not attempt to conceal from you the danger you are in," said he.

"Na, na," said the invalid, perking up; "what for wad she do that?—they wadna be a true freend that wad hide a man's danger frae him—we're aw ready enough to hide it frae oursells, and forget the care o' our ain immortal sowls."

"You have seen your minister, then, I suppose?"

"Oo aye, honest man! he ca's in nows and thans, and muckle edification I get frae him;"—then, calling to his dame, he began to comfort her for the loss she had sustained, as though it had been her own holiday suit.

"What a shocking woman!" exclaimed Gertrude, as they quitted the cottage; "how worse than unfeeling to have prepared her husband's dead-clothes, and have them even displayed before his eyes in that manner!"

"She certainly is not a favourable specimen of a Scotch gudewife," answered Mr Lyndsay; "but I have seen the most affectionate wife talk of the death of her husband, even while administering to his wants with the greatest solicitude; but they are much less sophisticated in their ideas upon these subjects than we are—they would think it highly wrong to use any deception at such a time."

"But how shocking to hear one's death talked of as inevitable——"

"But they do not talk of it in that manner—they believe that all things are possible with God—they send

for the doctor as they do for the minister, and pray for a blessing on the means used—they leave all in the hand of God. I have seen many on their death-beds in various circumstances, and I have always found that they who were in the habit of hearing of death and eternity — of conversing with their ministers and religious people — have, generally speaking, looked forward to death with resignation and composure."

"I can, indeed, easily imagine," said Lady Rossville, "that the poor man we have just left must look forward to heaven with great complacency, were it only to be rid of that tormenting creature, and out of that vile smoky cabin."

"A smoky house and a scolding wife have, indeed, always been looked upon as the *ne plus ultra* of human misery; but this is only amongst the rich—when you have seen more of the poor, you will be satisfied there are still greater evils—you are still a novice in the miseries of life, Gertrude."

"Perhaps so, and yet——" she stopped, and sighed, and they proceeded homewards in silence.

——o——

Chapter lxb.

She hath forgott how many a woeful stowre
For him she late endured; she speaks no more
Of past; true is it that true love hath no powre
To looken backe.

SPENSER.

ALL must have felt what it is in this ungenial clime to part with a fine day. It seems as though we were bidding farewell to some long-lost friend; and we love to watch even with pensive regret the last rays of the softly sinking sun, as we

would trace the lingering steps of some loved one whom it may be long ere we behold again.

"Fatigued as I am, still I must enjoy this lovely day to the last," said Lady Rossville, as they approached the castle, and she threw herself on a garden chair that stood upon the lawn; "it is one that sends such a 'summer feeling to the heart,' that I feel as though I were a better being while sitting here listening to the faint notes of that sweet thrush, than I should be shut up in the drawing-room with Lady Betty and Miss Pratt."

"It is much more agreeable at least," said Lyndsay, also seating himself—"as to its being more amiable and virtuous, I fear I may scarcely lay that flattering unction to my soul. I am apt to distrust myself since——"

"Since when?" asked the Countess.

"Since I knew you, Gertrude——"

This seemed rather to have burst from his lips involuntarily than to have been uttered deliberately; and there was something in the tone which made Gertrude start, as a vague suspicion darted across her mind that Lyndsay loved her. But she had scarcely time to admit the idea ere it was as quickly dispelled; for, when she turned to look on him, the earnest expression with which he was regarding her fled; and in a gay manner, he added—

"I flattered myself I had been an infinitely wiser, better, and more respectable person than I find I am—for I begin to feel myself, under your influence, gradually sinking into a soft, simple, neat-handed, somewhat melancholic sort of a *souffre douleur;* and, if I stay much longer with you, I must provide myself with a flute and a silk dressing-gown—and then——"

"What then?" asked Lady Rossville, laughingly.

"Why, then you must promise to look upon me as a very interesting creature; and I will stand, or sit,

half the night at my open window, playing lovelorn ditties, that will cause, as Gray says, the very cat to wring its hands."

"Well, I shall provide the silk dressing-gown and the flute—but for the lady and the cat, you must find these for yourself."

"But these will be only a small part of the stock in hand necessary for me to commence business with. I must be able to write sonnets upon every occasion—often upon no occasion at all. I must be able to take the most correct and striking likenesses without a single sitting——"

"'Tis time you had begun to practise that part of your profession, certainly," said Gertrude. "Do you remember how long ago it is since you promised to draw my picture?—Pray, begin now—I have nothing else to do; and this lovely setting sun will invest me with a little of his radiance, and soften down all my uglinesses:—see how beautiful every thing looks in its light!"

"But, you know, I warned you I never flattered in my portraits—mine profess to be 'truth severe'—cold, dry, hard facsimiles, without a single Claud Lorraine tint."

"No matter, let me see myself such as I am, or at least appear to my friends."

"Well, not to shock you at the very outset, I must say you appear to me to love truth, and to be sincere in the search of it—but you have some pride and a little obstinacy to prevent your arriving at it; then, your fancy is too lively to permit you to take the right way, and while you are under its fantastic dominion you will never judge correctly."

"Not very flattering, certainly," said the Countess, affecting to laugh—"'is just not ugly, and is just not mad,' seems to be the amount of your panegyric—but pray go on."

"You do not want penetration, but you form your opinions too hastily; you will be accused of inconsistency and caprice, but unjustly; you will only be undeceived——"

"I seem to have got into the hands of a fortune-teller rather than a portrait-painter," said Lady Rossville, somewhat pettishly; "and as I never listen to predictions that bode me no good, I'll none of yours—'tis an idle art, and no coming events shall cast their shadows upon me.—Come, this is enough for one sitting; you shall have another to-morrow, when, perhaps, you will do me such as I *am*, not as I *may* be."

"To-morrow I must leave you," said Lyndsay.

"No, pray do not talk of leaving me," cried Gertrude quickly. "What will become of me when you are gone? I shall have no one being with whom I can have any companionship—no one to talk with—no one to read with—no one to sing with—no one to walk with—no one to teach me any good thing—my dear cousin, say you will not leave me."

But Lyndsay shook his head.

"Come, Zoe," to a little Italian greyhound that lay at her feet, "do you join your pretty little entreaties to mine," and she made it assume a begging attitude. The dog was a gift from Delmour, and Lyndsay turned away his eyes.

"I must begone," said he.

"Nay, rather say *shall*, or *will* begone," cried the Countess, pettishly; "I do not believe there is any *must* in the matter—you are your own master, free to go or stay, as you yourself incline."

"Even were it so, do not be so much of a spoiled child, Gertrude, as to quarrel with your friend, merely because he has, what it is said all men have, and some women too, a will of his own."

"But I have more than once, of late, sacrificed mine to Mr Lyndsay's," said Gertrude, coldly.

"But were I to sacrifice my will, I must, at the same time, sacrifice my conscience along with it," said Lyndsay; "or rather, to confess the truth, they are somewhat at variance upon this occasion: the one urges me to stay—the other warns me to begone."

"The conscience may be mistaken as well as the will sometimes," said Gertrude;—"in this matter I suspect yours is, otherwise it would have told you how much good you may do by remaining here."

"No—it never tells me such flattering tales; that is the province of hope or fancy, and sometimes, perhaps, I may have been weak enough to listen to their idle tales——" He stopped in some emotion, and for an instant fixed his eyes on Gertrude's face; but if his words had any particular meaning, it was not caught by her, for not the slightest change was perceptible on her speaking countenance. "If I thought I could be of any real service to you, I would remain here even at the sacrifice of my own——" happiness was on his lips, but he checked himself, and substituted time; "but I have no right to interfere in the only way where I might be of use, and I cannot linger on for an indefinite time as a sort of spy upon the actions of others. You require protection, I know, and are now in a situation to claim it; choose, then, guardians for yourself, or allow the law to appoint them for you."

To think and to speak were commonly one and the same thing with Gertrude, and she instantly exclaimed—

"Then I shall choose you for one of my guardians."

"Choose me!" exclaimed Lyndsay, in astonishment. "No, that cannot be."

"Why not? I know nobody I should like so much to have for my guardian.—I am sure you would never scold me, or lecture me, however naughty I might

be—— Now, don't—pray don't propose to me any of your old cross things, with round wigs, and square buckles, and long pockets, who would preach me a sermon upon every five-pound note I squandered."

"Such guardians are scarcely to be met with now, except upon the stage," said Lyndsay, smiling.

"Perhaps the wigs and pockets—but the long faces and long lectures, I fear, prevail every where. I must know the person before I can put myself in such jeopardy."

"You may be in greater jeopardy, Gertrude," said her cousin gravely.

Lady Rossville blushed—she saw to what he alluded; and after a pause, she said, in some emotion—

"The danger which you seem to apprehend no longer exists—the person whose audacious conduct to me you twice resented is no more—he has perished at sea." And she recapitulated the account of the shipwreck, and her mother's testimony, confirming the fate of Lewiston.

"So far, then, I shall leave you with a lightened mind," said Lyndsay; "there seems no more to apprehend from that quarter at least.—If there are other dangers——"

But at that moment a post-chaise and four, the horses in a foam, came driving up the avenue full speed.

"Who can this be?" exclaimed Lady Rossville; —then, as the thought flashed upon her that it might be Colonel Delmour, she started up—her heart beat violently—her colour went and came—she would have moved towards the house, but her agitation was so great she sunk upon the seat, while her eyes remained fixed upon the carriage. It drew up at the castle gate; and scarcely had it stopped when the person from within burst open the door, and Colonel Delmour himself sprung out with such impetuosity that it was but a single glance could be caught of him as he rushed into

the house—but that was enough. Again Gertrude rose; but, ashamed of her emotion, she could not lift her eyes to Lyndsay's, or she would have seen that he was little less agitated than herself—she could only accept of the arm he offered her, and in silence they proceeded together towards the house.

As they entered the hall the voice of one of the servants was heard, as in reply to an interrogatory, "Her ladyship has been out for some hours with Mr Lyndsay;" and at that instant Colonel Delmour, with a hurried step and agitated air, rushed from the saloon. Joy, fear, doubt, displeasure, love, a thousand mingled emotions, were all struggling in Gertrude's breast—she tried to withdraw her arm from Lyndsay's, but she only clung the more helplessly to him; while he felt her increasing weight, and feared she would have fallen to the ground.

"Lady Rossville is fatigued with her walk," said he, addressing Colonel Delmour, and mastering his own agitation at sight of hers; "a glass of water here quickly," to the half-dozen of servants who stood idly lounging in the hall, and the whole instantly vanished in all the bustle and importance of their bearing. But, mortified and ashamed at this display of her weakness, the Countess instantly regained, in some degree, her self-possession. Even while her heart beat high, and her whole frame trembled with excessive emotion, she said, with a lofty air,—

"I have to apologise to Colonel Delmour for this uncourteous reception on his return to——"

At that moment Lyndsay, taking the water from the servant, presented it to her himself, in the manner of one privileged to render those little attentions.

"Desire my carriage to wait," cried Delmour, in a loud and passionate voice, as it was driving away.

Lady Rossville was now nerved to perfect self-

command, and, with a blush of offended dignity, she passed on to the saloon, where sat only Lady Betty, still lost in wonder at her nephew's sudden appearance and no less sudden flight. Lyndsay's indignation had been excited by the rudeness and violence of Colonel Delmour's address; but anger with him was at most but a transient feeling, and a moment after they had entered the saloon, he held out his hand to him in a friendly manner. But the other turned hastily on his heel, and paced the room with disordered step, utterly regardless of the questions Lady Betty continued to pour out upon him. At length, approaching Gertrude, he said, "I would speak with Lady Rossville alone."

For a moment the Countess hesitated at the abruptness of the demand, and her pride revolted at the manner in which it was made; but she rose, and with an inclination of the head led the way to another apartment. Colonel Delmour followed, when having shut the door—

"Gertrude," cried he, as he seized her hands, while his own shook with the violence of his emotion, "now speak my doom—from your own lips only will I hear it—say but the word—tell me I have been deceived—forgotten—forsaken?"

"O, no—no—never!" exclaimed Gertrude, giving way to tears, as her resentment began to subside at sight of her lover's anguish.

"Call it what you will then—but do not rack me by equivocating. Already I have endured tortures for your sake that worlds would not have bribed me to undergo—despair itself would have been a blessing, compared to these distracting doubts."

"'Tis I who have had cause to doubt," said the Countess, as she seated herself at a table, and shaded her eyes with her hand, ashamed of the tenderness her

tears betrayed for one whose constancy she had such cause to question.

"You who have had cause to doubt!" cried Delmour, impetuously; "*could* you then doubt me, Gertrude?"

"Had I not cause?—Why was I left at such a time, when a single word from you——"

"Would have consigned you for ever to poverty and obscurity.—Is it not so? You would have been mine, had I been base and selfish enough to have plunged you in ruin—to have sacrificed your happiness to my own."

"Ah! by what a degrading standard did you measure my happiness, if you thought pomp and wealth could ever compensate for broken vows—for a deceived heart!—you would have renounced me!"

"No, by Heavens, I would not—I will not!—But, yes—you are right, I would—I *will* renounce you, Gertrude—if, by doing so, I can insure your happiness, it matters not though mine be a wreck."

Lady Rossville spoke not—her heart heaved with emotion—and Colonel Delmour, leaning against the chimneypiece, contemplated her for some moments without speaking: at length, taking her passive hand, he seated himself on the sofa by her; then, in a voice for a moment calmed into tenderness, he said—

"Gertrude, there was a time when, had an angel spoken it, I would not have believed that aught on earth could ever have induced me to resign this hand—and even now worlds should not wrest it from me——but, fickle—faithless as you are, why should I seek to retain it?"

"Release me, Colonel Delmour," cried the Countess, in a voice choking with emotion—"I have not deserved—I will not endure such language," and she struggled to withdraw her hand.

"Yet hear me one moment—my fate is on your lips —tell me that our vows are cancelled, and, in doing so, seal my doom at once and for ever!"

But Gertrude spoke not.

"Gertrude—in spite of all—dearest—most beloved —I cannot resign you but with my dying breath—why do you impose upon me so cruel a sacrifice?" He unclasped the hand in which he had held hers locked— "Why suffer your hand to remain for an instant in mine?—Gertrude, you are free!"

Lady Rossville slowly withdrew it, then, raising her head, she shook off the tears which gemmed her eyes, and cast on him a look which spoke all the confiding tenderness of her soul,—then, replacing her hand within his, she turned away her head, to hide the blush that mantled her cheek.

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Chapter lxvj.

O Jove! why hast thou given us certain proof
To know adulterate gold; but stamp'd no mark
Where it is needed most—on man's base metal?

EURIPIDES.

LYNDSAY passed the intervening time in a state of feverish agitation very foreign to his natural equanimity of mind. That he loved Gertrude he could no longer conceal from himself; but his love was not of that violent yet contracted nature which seeks to engross and appropriate the affections exclusively to itself. He had proposed a nobler aim—a purer gratification; as his love was without idolatry, so was it free from selfishness. He had not sought to undermine her affections—he had aimed at elevating and ennobling them by extending

their sphere beyond the narrow, perishable limits of human attachment; and he had hoped that a mind so pure, so lofty, so generous as hers, might yet become enamoured of virtue—might yet be saved from uniting itself with a nature unworthy of its love. And now was the test; on this interview her fate seemed suspended. Her emotion at sight of Colonel Delmour had, indeed, evinced the power he still retained over her; but that power might be urged too far. Though Gertrude was soft and feminine in her feelings, yet her spirit was high, and ever ready to rise against violence and injustice; and thus the tie, which a tenderer hand could not have unloosed, might, by his own impetuosity, be broken. Such were the hopes and fears that alternately rushed over Lyndsay's heart, as he waited, in an agony of impatience, the result of the conference, his eyes fixed immovably upon the door which led to the adjoining apartment. Their usually soft benign expression had given way to dark and troubled melancholy, and Lady Betty's questions fell unheeded on his ear. At length the door opened, and the first glance sufficed to show Lyndsay that his doom and hers were sealed. Gertrude's eyes were still moist with tears, 'tis true; but there was a smile on her lip —a flush of joy on her cheek—a lightness in her step —an aërial grace diffused over her whole face and figure, that told a tale of reconciled love, and seemed as though Happiness itself were embodied in a mortal form. All had been explained, and explanations were received as proofs of holy writ—for what imperfect evidence suffices where the heart is willing to believe! Colonel Delmour told a tale of suffering—he told of the agonising alternative that had been offered to him to make her his, and in doing so to make her, at the same time, an outcast from the home of her fathers—to reduce her to obscurity and want:—he told her of the struggles of his

mind—of the menacing fears—the half-formed resolutions—the desperate thoughts which had harassed his fancy, and destroyed his peace by day;—the horrid dreams—the agonizing forms which had haunted his couch by night—till at length nature sunk under the conflict, and a violent fever ensued. No sooner was he sufficiently recovered to encounter the voyage, than, unable longer to endure this state of suspense, and yet still more unable to come to any decision until he had seen her, he formed the resolution of returning to Britain, be the consequences what they might—of sounding the depths of her affection, and of receiving his sentence from her own lips. The voyage proved tedious and hazardous, and, on landing, he proceeded direct to London. He had there heard, for the first time, of the death of Lord Rossville; and his brother, at the same time, made known to him his rejection by the Countess, and the fact, that her marriage with Edward Lyndsay was a settled point, and was to take place as soon as propriety admitted. Almost maddened at this intelligence, he had thrown himself into a post-chaise, and travelled night and day till he had arrived there, when his worst fears were confirmed by the answer he received to his inquiry for her, as well as from the footing she appeared to be upon with Lyndsay.

This was Colonel Delmour's way of telling his own story, and it was correct in everything save the *motives*. "What's done we fairly may compute," but who can trace actions to their source? who can fathom the depths of the human heart, or discern those secret springs, which, although they send forth waters alike pure to the eye, are yet as the issues of life and death? Colonel Delmour had told a tale which in every circumstance was true, and yet the colouring was false. He had ascribed to disinterested affection what, in reality, proceeded from self-interest; for although he assuredly did

love, it was love compounded of such base materials as adversity, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear, would soon have shivered to atoms. But she saw nothing of all this, and she gave her tears—her faith—her love to him, whom she thought more than worthy of them all. His looks too seemed to confirm his words, for he looked thin, and pale, and harassed; but as the cloud cleared away from his brow, and the traces of passion which had disfigured his fine features disappeared, that gave him an interest in her eyes which more than atoned for the want of more dazzling attributes.

On her part, Gertrude could also have told much; but 'tis woman's part to suffer, man's privilege to speak on those occasions; and while Colonel Delmour poured forth the history of his feelings in all the eloquence of excitement, it was plain to see that he touched an answering chord in her heart, and that she too had endured all that he expressed. But, now that the storm was past, the sunshine of the soul was theirs, only varied according to the different natures from which it emanated; and as Lyndsay beheld the April-like joy that beamed in Gertrude's face, and met the haughty exulting glance of Delmour, he, for a moment, closed his eyes, as though he could also have closed his heart against the conviction that Gertrude was lost to him—lost to the higher, happier destiny, that he had fondly traced out for her.

"What's taking you away in such a hurry, Frederick?" asked Lady Betty, laying down her book and her spectacles on their entrance.

"I only came in haste, and have no intention of returning the same way," answered he, with a smile of meaning to the Countess; then ringing the bell, he gave orders to discharge his carriage.

"Where did you come from to-day?" was Lady Betty's second interrogatory.

"That I really cannot tell; having travelled day and night since I landed at Falmouth, their boundaries are not very accurately defined in my mind or my mind's eye either."

"What was the need of that?" demanded her ladyship. "Had you heard of your good uncle's death?"

"In London, where I only stopped half an hour."

"Did you see your brother? Did he tell you that he had given up the election? Did your mother and sisters tell you that?"

"I did—he did—they did—let us have done."

"And what was the nonsense of your posting down, then?"

"To put a stop to absurd pretensions," answered Colonel Delmour, with a sort of insolent *nonchalance*, as he looked at Mr Lyndsay.

"But do you think you'll succeed?"

Colonel Delmour smiled a smile of haughty disdain; Lady Rossville coloured; and Lyndsay, looking steadily at him, said calmly—

"I have heard of no absurd pretensions—none who had not, at least, an equal right to try their merits if they had thought proper."

Ere Colonel Delmour could utter the scornful retort which had risen to his lips, the door opened, and uncle Adam walked in, with his antique peruke, and blue boot hose; for he had now got so tame, that he had learnt to walk the house at all hours of the day. He was not aware of the arrival of a stranger, otherwise he would certainly have skulked to the last moment—if, indeed, he would not actually have fled the country to his own city of refuge in Barnford.

Colonel Delmour surveyed him for a moment from head to foot with unfeigned astonishment, when Lady Rossville introduced him as her uncle, Mr Ramsay.

He then, quickly recovering himself, saluted him with a bow, twice repeated, so condescendingly profound, and with such an air of high breeding, as formed a ludicrous contrast to uncle Adam's awkward repulsive gait, and dry uncouth manner. The latter possessed too much tact not to feel what was implied, and that such lofty courtesy only betokened one "proud enough to be humble," and a new stock of wrath began to ferment within him—that on hand having previously been disposed of at the expense of Dame Lowrie's dead-clothes. For the first time Lady Rossville blushed for her relation; but, ashamed to show that she was ashamed, she hastened to make some remark to him on the scene they had witnessed in the cottage; then, as if afraid to hear him answer, she went on—"But I must tell the story, and my cousin Lyndsay will help me in my Scotch;" and with her musical voice, and refined accents, she attempted to take off the barbarous dialect of the cottars; but when she came to the *denouement*, uncle Adam burst out with "The impudent thief! She deserved to hae been sent the same gate as her duds!"

Colonel Delmour absolutely stared, and that was a great deal for a man like Colonel Delmour to do. Lady Rossville, covered with confusion, tried to laugh; but the thought that Colonel Delmour was shocked with her uncle made it rather a difficult matter. Luckily at that moment her servant entered to say that Mrs St Clair had returned from her airing, and begged to see her ladyship immediately. The Countess rose to obey the summons. Colonel Delmour attended her to the door, pressed her hand; whispered some soft nothing in her ear, to which she replied with a blush and a smile; then, calling his servant, said he should go to dress, while she repaired to her mother's apartment.

Chapter lxbij.

O! how this spring of life resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day;
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away.

SHAKESPEARE.

"WHAT is this I hear?" was the exclamation that greeted Gertrude on her entrance. "Is it possible that Colonel Delmour has had the effrontery to come to this house? Is it credible that you have had the weakness to receive him under your roof after what has passed?"

"I know nothing that ought to render Colonel Delmour an unwelcome guest in my house," answered the Countess, endeavouring to speak calmly and decidedly.

"Then you do not know that as the poor, dependent Gertrude St Clair, he slighted, disowned, and in a manner rejected you; and that now, as Countess of Rosville, he flies to you, worships you, would marry you? Is it not so? and did I not foretell how it would be?"

"While we view Colonel Delmour's conduct in such different lights, 'tis impossible we should agree. Mamma, I beseech you, say no more. I am satisfied—completely—perfectly satisfied, that he has acted all along from the noblest and most disinterested motives."

"How has he proved that? Who is there credulous enough to believe his averments of disinterested affection?—Why should they be believed? What right has he to expect such monstrous credulity?"

"The right which every generous mind feels it has upon the faith and confidence of another."

"Gertrude, your words are those of a child—I may

say of a fool. Who else could be weak enough to credit assertions contradicted by the whole tenor of the man's conduct?"

"Be it so then!" cried Lady Rossville, vainly struggling to retain her composure; "I am a child—a fool—for I believe in Colonel Delmour's truth and honour. The prejudices of the whole world would not shake my conviction."

"And what is to be the consequences of your madness? Will you dare to brave my authority, and marry him against my consent?" cried Mrs St Clair, giving way to one of her transports of passion. Lady Rossville remained silent. "Speak, I desire you," continued she, with increasing impetuosity; "I repeat, will you *dare* to marry him against my consent?"

"Mamma, I have twice solemnly passed my word to you that I will not marry until I have attained the age of twenty-one."

"If you would have me trust to that, then till that period arrives dismiss your lover—this very day let Colonel Delmour leave your house, and leave you free:—consent to that, and I will believe you sincere."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Countess, in agitation.—"How can you require of me to act in such a manner?"

"Then leave it to me. I am the fittest person to act for you in this matter. I will see Colonel Delmour myself;" and she was moving towards the door, when Gertrude laid her hand upon her arm, and, with a cheek coloured with resentment, exclaimed—"If my friends are to be turned from under my roof, then is my own house no longer a habitation for me.—I will seek another home—other protection."

Mrs St Clair turned pale with passion, and, in a voice almost suffocated, she said—"In the meantime, I *command* you, by the duty you owe me, to confine

yourself to your own apartment for the present.—Do not think to brave my power—I still possess it, and will use it."

There are bounds beyond which passion cannot go without counteracting its own purpose; and Mrs St Clair had scarcely uttered the words, when she was sensible she had gone too far to be obeyed. Lady Rossville instantly became calm; but it was not the calm of fear or of submission, but that of settled determination, as she bent her head in silent acquiescence, and, without uttering a syllable, was about to withdraw.

"Stay—where—what do you mean?" cried her mother, interrupting her in her progress to the door.

"To obey," answered Lady Rossville, calmly.

"Gertrude, why—why do you drive me to such extremities?"

"'Tis I who am driven to extremities, God help me!" exclaimed her daughter, bursting into tears.

"Gertrude, what is your meaning—what is your purpose?" cried her mother, in violent agitation.

Lady Rossville was silent for a few moments. The question was repeated, when, after a struggle to regain her composure, she said—"This house, and all that I call mine, is yours to command; but my affections, my liberty, will brook no controul. For this day I submit to be a prisoner in my own house—to-morrow I will place myself under the protection of the laws of my country—from these I shall surely meet with justice—let these appoint guardians for me——"

Mrs St Clair was struck with consternation. She felt the error she had committed in goading to the utmost a spirit such as her daughter's; and there remained but one way to extricate herself from the dilemma she had brought herself into by her violence: true, that was the old way, but it had hitherto suc-

ceeded, and might still answer the purpose better than any other.

"No, Gertrude," cried she, "since it is your wish that we should part, it is for me to seek another home. Suffer me to remain here for this night, and to-morrow you shall get rid of me for ever. I feel *I* can neither contribute to *your* greatness nor your happiness; but all that I would lay claim to—peace of mind and respectability—are in your hands. Spare me, at least, the misery and disgrace of being denounced to the world by one for whom I have done and suffered so much!" and Mrs St Clair wept real genuine tears.

But at that moment Mrs St Clair's maid tapped at the door, to inform her lady that dinner was upon the table; and, at the same moment, the gong sounded, in confirmation of the intelligence. In an instant all high-wrought feeling was put to flight by this vulgar every-day occurrence.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed she, aware that her elaborate toilet required at least an hour to arrange—"What is to be done?—How came we to miss the dressing-bell?—It is impossible for me to appear; and both to be absent would have a strange appearance. Gertrude, you must join the company; do make haste." Then, as her daughter stood irresolute—"As you love me, obey me now. Let there be mutual forgiveness—mutual confidence. Away, my love;" and she kissed her forehead. To avoid farther contention, Gertrude hastened to her apartment to dress, and recover her composure as she best could.

———o———

Chapter xviij.

My soul, sit thou a patient looker-on;
Judge not the play before the play is done;
Her plot has many changes; every day
Speaks a new scene: the last act crowns the play.
QUARLES.

BUT there was no fairy awaiting her there to dry her tears and deck her from head to foot by a touch of her wand, but a mere human, though very expert waiting-maid, lost in a maze of conjecture at her lady's non-appearance at this, the most important crisis of the day, in her estimation.

"I have put out your black crape robe with bugles, my lady," began the important Miss Masham; "and your black satin and your pearls, my lady, and your——"

"Pray, don't teaze me, Masham," interrupted her lady, in a fretful manner, very foreign to her natural one.

"My lady!" exclaimed the bewildered maid.

"Desire Jourdain to say, that I beg the company may not wait for me—I will join them at the second course—and give me—no matter what; no, not that odious velvet—never let me see it again."

"Crape, to be sure, my lady, is much more suitable now; though satin, you know, my lady, is the most properest demme schuchong."*

The Countess sighed as she threw herself upon a seat, and allowed herself, for the first time, to be dressed according to Miss Masham's taste.

"What a frightful head!" was the reward of Masham's toils, as her lady looked at herself in the glass; then, smote with the mortification she had

* Demi-saison.

inflicted, she added, "But I believe 'tis because I look so cross—don't I, Masham?"

"Cross! dear, my lady, that is such an idear! As if your ladyship could ever be cross!—and your head, my lady, looks charmingly becoming." But her lady demolished part of Miss Masham's work before she descended to the dining-room.

Notwithstanding that Miss Pratt had instantly voted that Lady Rossville's message should be acted upon, and loudly protested that it would be very ill-bred were they not to eat their dinner the same as if she were present when she had desired it, yet Colonel Delmour as promptly decided otherwise, and ordered the dinner to be taken down stairs again. Then, quitting the room, he repaired to the gallery through which he knew the Countess must pass from her own apartment, there to wait her appearance, and lead her to dinner.

The old feud between Pratt and him had lost nothing by absence, and they had met with the same feelings of hostility as they had parted. She had expressed in the loudest manner her astonishment at sight of him—he was the very last person she had dreamt of seeing at Rossville—had figured him still at Gibraltar with his regiment—it was so long since he had been heard of, and sometimes it was "out of sight out of mind," &c. &c. &c.

On Colonel Delmour's part, he, in a contemptuous manner, had congratulated Miss Pratt on having accepted an official situation in Lady Rossville's household, which insured her friends the enjoyment of her company at all times, and at all seasons, however unseasonable.

No sooner was his back turned than Miss Pratt and uncle Adam began to lay their heads together, for he had already become a new bond of union between them.

"What do you think of this new-comer, Mr Ramsay?" whispered she, as she made up to him in the out-of-the-way corner where he usually sat. Uncle Adam, who scorned to whisper, and, indeed, would not have whispered to have saved the Capitol, only replied by an expressive grunt, which was, however, sufficiently encouraging for his friend to proceed.

"What do you think of his taking it upon him to order the dinner down again, after Lady Rossville had sent to desire us to begin? I'm sure I didn't care a pin-head, for my part, about the matter, but I really thought it vastly impertinent in him of all people to say black or white in this house; for, between ourselves, I can tell you he is no favourite in a certain quarter."

"I dinna wonder at it, for he's a proud, upsetting-like puppy."

"Proud! I only wish, sir, you had seen as much of his pride and impertinence as I've done."

"I've just seen enough o't.—Didna I see him boo to me as if he were the Prince o' Wales?"

"That's exactly Anthony Whyte!—my nephew, Mr Whyte of Whyte Hall! He says he can stand any thing but Colonel Delmour's bow, for that he bows to him as if he was his shoemaker—a man that cauld buy and sell him, and all his generation! As for me, I assure you, I am thankful he gives me none of his civilities."

"What's brought him here?" demanded uncle Adam, gradually winding up to the sticking-point.

"Indeed, sir, that's more than I can tell you, unless it's to try whether he can come better speed with the Countess than he did with the heiress. But there's little chance of that, or I'm mistaken."

"She has mair sense, I hope."

"That she has!—Not but that I always think she might have waited and looked about her a little; for,

you know, to use an old saying, 'There's as gude fish i' the sea as ever came out o't,' and she needn't have been in any hurry."

"I see nae gude that comes o' waiting," said uncle Adam, with a sigh, as he thought how he had waited in vain;—"but I am at a loss to understand wha ye ca' the fish, for I dinna think she's ta'en up wi' onybody that I've seen."

"My dear Mr Ramsay! Is that possible! I really would have given you credit for greater penetration! Ay! not to have found out what's been going on all this time,"—and her eyes took the direction where Lyndsay sat reading, or at least appearing to read, for his thoughts were otherwise employed.

Uncle Adam shook his head.

"No, Mr Ramsay—you know, if you doubt that, you may doubt any thing. Even Lady Betty, honest woman, who seldom sees over her nose, asked me t'other day if I did not think we were like to have a wedding soon? In fact, every thing, I believe, was pretty much settled before poor Lord Rossville's death—though, whether he would have given his consent, I can't pretend to say—I only speak of what I know for a certainty."

Mr Ramsay still looked incredulous.

"But what makes you doubt it, sir?—there's nothing very unlikely in it. To be sure, as I said before, Edward Lyndsay's no match for her in point of fortune, you know; but she has plenty for both. And he's a genteel, elegant-looking creature; and though I think his notions, on some things, a great deal too strict, yet I know him to be an honourable fine creature as ever lived, and she'll change him, depend upon it—she'll bring him round to her way of thinking before it's long.

"Weel, weel; we shall see—time will show," said

Mr Ramsay, still in that unconvinced manner which is infinitely more provoking than flat contradiction.

"The old ram-horned goose, that he is," thought she, "what can he know about these things?" Then aloud, "See!—'pon my word, Mr Ramsay, I think we've seen enough to satisfy anybody—and heard too, some of us; for instance, what would you say, if it had so happened that I was so situated as to be actually obliged to hear (without the slightest intention of listening, but this between you and me) her give our friend, the Colonel there, his *congé*, and, at the same time, acknowledge herself engaged to Edward Lyndsay?—and that I heard with my own ears."

Miss Pratt had told this story so often that it had gradually grown upon her hands, and was so firmly impressed upon her own mind that she now told it with all the force of truth.

Uncle Adam was vanquished. "Ye ken, if ye did that, there need be na mair said about it. But I wouldna hae said that she was in love wi' him, though I'll no say but I've sometimes thought there might be something on his side for her. Weel, if it is sae, as ye say, she might hae done better, and she might hae done waur. But the warst o't is, I dinna think there is muckle love on her side;" and uncle Adam heaved a sigh of fond remembrance.

"I'll tell you what, Mr Ramsay, love's a very different thing now-a-days from what it was in our time.—Preserve me! I believe I would have sunk through the ground before I could have gone on as Lady Rossville does. Such a work as she makes with—Cousin Lyndsay this, and Edward that!—and what's all this work about visiting the poor, and building school-rooms, and such nonsense, but to please him? And yet she's a sweet, modest-like creature, too, and, for as easy as she is, there's really nothing

flirting in her manner neither. But just look at that!" with a jog on the elbow to her ally, as Lady Rossville entered, followed by Colonel Delmour. "Did you ever see such impudence, to be hunting her in that manner?—Poor soul! she looks quite fluttered: I really think she has been crying."

Lady Rossville was beginning to apologise for the delay she had occasioned, when dinner was, for the second time, announced. She motioned Lady Betty, as usual, to take the lead, and looked at Colonel Delmour to offer his arm; but with one of what uncle Adam called his Prince of Wales' bows to Edward Lyndsay, he fell back, and seized the Countess's hand with a look of haughty triumph.

"I hope you observed that manœuvre," whispered Miss Pratt, bending towards uncle Adam, as they stotted along, side by side, but a full yard asunder—for he would as soon have offered his head as his hand, or even his arm, upon these occasions;—"but there's an old byword, 'Fanned fires and forced love ne'er did weel;' and some people will maybe not crack quite so crouse by and by."

Miss Pratt's ideas were farther confirmed by Lady Rossville's manner at dinner; for she observed she paid more attention to, and seemed more at her ease with every body, than Colonel Delmour. Uncle Adam likewise remarked this—but he drew a different augury from it, as he called to mind his own shamefacedness when Lizzie Lundie was in question. He marked, too, Edward Lyndsay's thoughtful, melancholy expression, so different from that of a favoured suitor, and the more striking from being contrasted with his rival's gay exulting air. And as he revolved all these things, his mind misgave him, even in spite of Miss Pratt's confidential assurances.

"I could wager you any thing you like, you're

mista'en about yon," said he, with a shake of his head, to her.

"Done!" was promptly replied,—for, next to a legacy, Miss Pratt liked a wager.—"What shall it be?"

"I could lay you a crown."

"A crown!" with contempt; "I'll take you five guineas."

"Five guineas!—that's a wager indeed!—Weel, I dinna care though I do—'a's no tint that's in hazard.'" And uncle Adam and Miss Pratt touched thumbs upon it.

"I'm very curious to know what you and my uncle are laying not only your heads but your hands together about?" said the Countess, with a smile, to Miss Pratt.

Mr Ramsay blushed up to the eyes at having been so detected; but Miss Pratt, nowise abashed, answered, with a significant look—

"Your ladyship has, perhaps, a better right to know than any body else; but there's a good time coming—all's well that ends well."

"Even when a gentleman gives his left hand to a lady?" said Colonel Delmour.—"I thought even Miss Pratt would scarcely have ventured on such a contract."

"They say ill-doers are ill-dreaders, Colonel," retorted his antagonist;—"and, for my part, I would prefer an honest man's left hand to a neer-do-weel's right any day of all the year.—'There's my thumb, I'll ne'er beguile you,' was a favourite song in our day, sir," to uncle Adam, "though it's maybe little, too little in vogue now—but we have not forgot it."

This was a random shot of Miss Pratt's; but it had the effect of raising Colonel Delmour's colour as well as his anger, though he prudently suppressed the latter

for the present, and dexterously managed to give the conversation a turn to Scottish songs, and from thence, by an easy transition, to Italian music and poetry, which gave him an opportunity of uttering and insinuating many a tender sentiment, and, at the same time, put him completely beyond the reach of his enemy, who had the command of no tongue but her own.

When the dessert was put upon the table, the usual bustle announced the entrance of Mrs St Clair; for an extraordinary eclat now attended all that lady's movements, as she entered a room somewhat in the manner of a tragedy queen coming upon the stage. And as she was really a fine-looking woman, dressed highly, and had a good portly air, the effect was very successful. She really looked—what she evidently intended to represent—the Dowager Countess.

Colonel Delmour rose and advanced to meet her with an air of *empressement* he was far from feeling; but the hand he held out to her was not accepted, and a distant inclination of the head was the only acknowledgment vouchsafed, as she moved on to the seat he had vacated by Lady Rossville, and took possession of it.

"I presume I interfere with no one's rights in taking this chair, which, to me, possesses the double attraction of being next my daughter and nearest the fire."

Lady Rossville blushed at this open display of her mother's hostility. Colonel Delmour bit his lip to repress the scornful retort which was ready to burst forth. Miss Pratt hemmed, and gave uncle Adam a jog on the elbow.

"You look fatigued, love," addressing her daughter in a fondling manner; "you have done too much to-day—why, you must have been out at least three hours this morning—Mr Lyndsay, I shall scarcely trust my daughter with you again. I hope you ate

something—Lady Betty, I hope you made a point of Gertrude taking something good? Now, come, let me dress a little pine for you in the way you used to like it abroad;" and taking off her gloves, and displaying her large, round, white arms, all glittering in rings and bracelets, she began to cut up a pine-apple, and show her skill in this refined branch of elegant cookery.

Lady Rossville felt this display of her mother's affection was merely with a view to deceive others as to the footing they were upon; she could, therefore, only sit in silent endurance of it, and Mrs St Clair continued to overwhelm her with endearing epithets and tormenting assiduities, which she could neither repel nor return. The party was too small to admit of *tête-à-têtes*, and too dissimilar in all its parts to carry on any thing of general conversation; and the Countess, weary of the irksome and idle verbiage of the dinner-table, rose early, and retired to the drawing-room.

"Take you care of these two," whispered Miss Pratt to uncle Adam, as she was leaving the room; "for I see a certain person's ready to fight with the wind."

No sooner had the ladies left the room than Colonel Delmour, going to the already blazing fire, began to stir it so violently that it roared, and crackled, and burned, till uncle Adam felt as though he should be roasted alive sitting in his own seat. But Colonel Delmour, uttering an ejaculation about cold, rang the bell, and ordered some mulled claret, well spiced, to be got ready immediately; then, placing himself before the fire, he stood there humming an opera air, and occasionally exciting the troublesome gambols of a large French poodle, to whom he addressed a few words in its native tongue.

"It will no be possible to live in a hoose wi' that puppy," thought uncle Adam, and he began to meditate

his retreat the following day ; but then, as the thoughts of Guy Mannering came over him, he staggered in his resolution : leave it he could not—to borrow it he would have been ashamed—to abstract it never entered into his primitive imagination ; for, in his day, it had not been the fashion for ladies and gentlemen to take other people's books, or to lose other people's books, or, in short, to do any of the free and easy things that are the privilege of the present age. True, there were libraries in Barnford ; but to have recourse to a circulating library !—to have it through the town that he was a *novelle* reader !—there was distraction in the thought ! Perish Dumple and Dandie Dinmont, Dominie Sampson, and the whole host of them, before he would stoop to such a measure ! But, then, not to see the end of that scoundrel Glossin, whom he could have hanged with his own hands, only that hanging was too good for him—ay, there's the rub ! To be sure, he might skip to the end ; but he never had skipped in his life, and had such a thorough contempt for skippers that he would rather have "burst in ignorance," than have submitted to so degrading a mode of being relieved. At one time, during dinner, he had thoughts of sounding Miss Pratt as to the result, but his courage failed him —it was hazarding too much with a woman ; now he resolved whether he might not, by going about the bush with Mr Lyndsay, extract the catastrophe from him—but then he never had gone about the bush all his life, and he was rather at a loss how to set about it now. Before he could make up his mind, therefore, the time came for adjourning to the drawing-room ; but, instead of repairing there, uncle Adam stole away to his own apartment, to try whether another chapter would not set the matter at rest.

Chapter lxix.

But, all in vain, I bolt my sentences.

EURIPIDES.

MRS ST CLAIR'S generalship was exerted so successfully, throughout the evening, that, without any apparent design, the lovers were effectually precluded from exchanging words with each other, except in the way of common conversation. But this could not always continue; she felt she had committed herself with her daughter, and must now either act with decision and authority, or give up the attempt altogether. The first would be a dangerous experiment with one of the Countess's high spirit, and the other was too galling an alternative to be voluntarily embraced. Sooner or later, she saw it must end in guardians being appointed for her daughter, and she therefore determined to put the best face she could upon it, and be the first to propose the measure herself; not without hopes that, while she thus appeared to throw up the reins, she might at the same time be enabled the more effectually to strengthen her own hands. When the party broke up for the night she took Lady Rossville's arm and led her to her own dressing-room, when, dismissing her attendant, she thus began—"Gertrude, as this is perhaps the last time I may have an opportunity of addressing you under your own roof——"

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed the Countess, seizing her mother's hand, "do not, I beseech you do not recur to what has passed on that subject! This house is yours—you must not leave it—I will not leave you——"

"Gertrude, be calm and hear me——"

"No, mamma; first hear me declare that all remonstrance will prove unavailing — that no earthly

consideration ever can change my resolution—I will not renounce my own free choice."

Lady Rossville spoke slowly, and she pronounced the last words in a manner which showed that opposition would indeed be vain.

"My object is not to contend with you, Gertrude," said her mother, with a sigh; "for I am fully aware how little influence I now possess over you; but my wish is to see you placed under the protection and guardianship of those who, if they want a mother's love, may soon possess more than a mother's influence. Say who it is that you would choose for your guardian?"

"I choose you, mamma, for one, and my cousin Lyndsay for another—if a third is necessary, do you and he appoint whom you please."

Mrs St Clair was thunderstruck at the promptitude and decision of this answer; and she could only repeat, in a tone of amazement—

"Mr Lyndsay your guardian! What an idea!"

"Surely there is nothing wrong in it, mamma?—and who else could I name?"

"It certainly is not customary to choose so very young a man for such an office."

"But Mr Lyndsay knows how I am situated—I consider myself as having been repeatedly obliged to him beyond the possibility of my ever repaying him; and although on one point we certainly differ,"—Gertrude blushed as she spoke—"yet that does not prevent my doing justice to his general character. I respect and esteem him as my friend—as the person who has twice saved me from insult, once from destruction; and I would fain prove to him, in perhaps the only way I may ever have in my power, the reliance I have on him, by placing myself under his controul. After the scenes he has witnessed, I owe to myself to appoint Edward Lyndsay my guardian."

Mrs St Clair was silent for some time, while, in her own mind, she balanced the *pros* and *cons* of this measure. In the first place, she disliked the thought of having to deal with a person of Edward Lyndsay's acute understanding, unbending principle, and high standard of rectitude—one who, besides, already knew too much of her private concerns, and, consequently, could not be impressed with a very favourable idea of her character. But, to balance these drawbacks, he was evidently no friend to Colonel Delmour, and she thought she might safely calculate on his assistance to further any scheme to preserve Gertrude from becoming the dupe of his artifices. She was aware that he took more than a common interest in her daughter, and she had no doubt but she would so manage as by that means to gain an ascendency over him, while she had little fear that he would ever succeed in supplanting his rival; she would be on her guard against that, and, at any rate, it was worth running all risks to detach her from her present entanglement. Still, even in this view, it was a bitter pill to swallow, and she remained thoughtful and disconcerted. At last she said, "You talk of repaying your obligations to Lyndsay, as though it were a benefit you were about to confer on him, by choosing him for your guardian. Are you aware that it is an office attended with much trouble and responsibility, and that you will only be adding to the weight of that mighty debt you have already incurred?"

"My cousin, I know, will not consider it in that light; and, even if he should, I would rather be indebted to him than to any one else."

"Yet there are others on whom you have at least equal claims, and whom the world might think rather more suitable guardians for you."

"I do not know to whom you allude, mamma."

"It is not for me to point them out to you," said Mrs St Clair, with affected dignity.

"If you mean my uncle Adam, he is out of the question; he is so odd——"

"I do not mean *my* uncle," interrupted her mother; "you have still nearer relatives."

Lady Rossville coloured at the thoughts of Mr Alexander Black;—there was a good-humoured vulgar familiarity about him she could scarcely brook, and to subject herself to it was more than her proud spirit could submit to. She made no reply.

"There is also another person, whom I have less scruple in naming to you; and either, or both of those, I believe, the world in general would deem perfectly unexceptionable in point of station, connection, character, experience, property—in short, all the essentials for such a trust; neither of them certainly are Werters or St Preux, but they are both what I think fitter for the purpose—they are both men of unblemished character, respectable understanding, mature age, and good if not great families; but to one or both of these add, if you choose, any third party, such as Lord Millbank, Sir Peter Wellwood, Lord Fairacre—all of them you have seen and know something of, and one of them, joined either with Mr Black or Major Waddell——"

"Major Waddell!" exclaimed the Countess; "surely, mamma, you are not serious? Major Waddell my guardian! No, that is too, really too humiliating."

"You assume a vast deal too much with your new dignities," said Mrs St Clair, warmly, "when you presume to talk in that strain of a man born and bred a gentleman, and connected, too, with the first families in the country. The time may come when you may know what degradation is; and, much as you despise my family, you may yet——but no more of this folly; I

have named to you no less than five individuals, each and all of whom I consider perfectly unexceptionable in every respect."

"Well, then, if I must be so guarded, let Mr Lyndsay and you raise a whole regiment of guards if you will —with the exception of Major Waddell—every thing else I leave to you and my cousin"—Lady Rossville laid particular emphasis on the word cousin—"and now, mamma, pray dismiss me — I am dying for sleep."

"And I of care," said her mother, with a deep sigh.

"Do not say so, mamma; be assured we shall both be happy in our own way;" and, kissing her, Gertrude withdrew to her own apartment.

Unwilling as she was to yield, Mrs St Clair felt that she had no alternative. Sometimes she thought of leaving Rossville, and taking her daughter along with her. But where could they go that Colonel Delmour would not follow? And by adopting violent measures, she found she would only drive the Countess to extremities —perhaps accelerate the very evils she was most anxious to avoid. In short, after a night of restless deliberation, the mortifying conclusion she arrived at was, that, in this instance, she must submit to her daughter's decision, and adopt the plan she had declared herself determined to pursue. It was particularly disagreeable to her too, on account of the footing she was upon with Mr Lyndsay. She still stood pledged to him for an explanation of the mysteries he had witnessed, but that pledge she had no wish or intention to redeem. The time was past—she had nothing to fear from him, and she felt averse to recur to a subject which she wished to be for ever consigned to oblivion.

In spite of all this, however, the thing must be done; and it would be much better done were she to come boldly forward as if of her own free will, than if she

waited till she was compelled to do so in compliance with her daughter's wish. The following morning, therefore, she sent at an early hour to desire Lady Rossville to attend her in her dressing-room; and Gertrude was surprised, upon obeying the summons, to find her mother already up and dressed, as, ever since Lord Rossville's death, she had indulged in late hours, and secluded herself in her own apartment during the greater part of the day.

"I wish to know, Gertrude," said she, in a solemn manner, "whether you still retain the same sentiments that you professed last night—is it still your determination to throw off the parental yoke, to publish your distrust of your mother?"

"It is still my determination," answered the Countess, gravely, "to obey my mother in all things compatible with what is due to myself; and I proclaim my sentiments to the world when I voluntarily make choice of her as my guardian—the other *must* be Edward Lyndsay." Lady Rossville spoke even more firmly than she had done the preceding night; and Mrs St Clair found that all attempts to turn her from this resolution would prove abortive.

"Be it so, then!" cried she; "any thing must be better than this state of things. Give me your arm. I mean to breakfast below to-day;" and they descended together to the breakfast-room, where only uncle Adam and Miss Pratt had just appeared. These two worthies were in the heat of a colloquy; but on the entrance of the ladies it suddenly ceased in a very abrupt and suspicious manner; and uncle Adam shuffled away to the window with ears pendent, while Miss Pratt, who at first was quite thrown on her beam-ends, began to rally her forces.

The mystery was simply the last night's wager, renewed, not without hopes on Pratt's side, of per-

suading uncle Adam to knock under at once upon the voluminous mass of evidence she was pouring out upon him, and which, she flattered herself, would finally terminate in her fingering the five guineas, as she already looked upon them as her own, and felt somewhat impatient at being kept out of her lawful property. They had, however, all the air of detected lovers; and Mrs St Clair's antipathy against Miss Pratt was trebled tenfold, as the idea flashed upon her that she was endeavouring to inveigle uncle Adam and his seventy thousand pounds into an alliance offensive in the highest degree. However, their loves were a secondary consideration at present, and she allowed them to pass unnoticed, in the virtuous intention of crushing them effectually at some future period.

Breakfast passed very heavily. There was an evident constraint on all present; for even Miss Pratt was more intent on watching the progress of her wager, than in dispensing the usual flow of chit-chat. Mrs St Clair maintained the same haughty reserve towards Colonel Delmour, which he either was or affected to appear quite unconscious of, and directed his looks and attentions solely to Lady Rossville. But Miss Pratt's abstraction seldom lasted long; and as she chanced to cast her eye on Lyndsay, she suddenly exclaimed, "Bless my heart, my dear! what makes you look so ill to-day?"

"I was not aware that I was looking particularly ugly this morning," answered he.

"Ugly, my dear! that's a very strong word; as Anthony Whyte says, it's one thing to look ill, and another thing to look ugly; and that there's many a one it would be paying too high a compliment to to tell them they were looking ill, for that would imply that they sometimes looked well—so you see you ought to be much flattered by my telling you that you are

looking ill. — Don't you think so, Lady Rossville?"

"I suspect Mr Lyndsay is not easily flattered," answered she; "I was trying my powers with him in that way yesterday, but I cannot flatter myself I was successful."

"A fair acknowledgment that you were only flattering me all the while," said he, forcing a smile; "I half suspected as much, and therefore, to punish you for your insincerity, I shall certainly remain where I am for this day at least."

"I suspect that will prove rather an encouragement than a corrective to the vice," said Mrs St Clair, gaily; "and lest Mr Lyndsay should next mistake the matter so far as to think of rewarding our plain-dealing by running away from us, I engage him to attend me now to the library."

Mr Lyndsay bowed his acquiescence, not without some surprise; and, as he rose, Mrs St Clair put her arm within his, and was leaving the room, when, as if recollecting something, she called her daughter to her, and contrived to converse her out of the room, and to lead her through the suite of apartments till they came to that adjoining the library.

"Wait here, my love, for a few minutes," said she; "I would first speak with Mr Lyndsay alone, but it will be necessary you should join us immediately."

Lady Rossville felt as if she had only been taken there to be away from Colonel Delmour, and she almost smiled in derision at her mother's petty stratagems.

"Now!" cried Miss Pratt, in an exulting tone, to uncle Adam, as the party left the room.

"Weel—what noo?" demanded he, in an undaunted tone.

"That's really speaking out," continued she, pointing after them, and, at the same time, casting a

glance at Colonel Delmour, who had hitherto sat in a sort of bitter scornful silence; but, on finding himself left at table with such a group as uncle Adam, Lady Betty, and Miss Pratt, he had immediately risen, and after carelessly tossing some fragments of the breakfast to his dog, and whistling a French air to him, he sauntered away with his usual air of high-bred nonchalance.

"Sour grapes," whispered Miss Pratt to uncle Adam.

"I'm no very sure about that," was the reply, as he prepared to creep away to his turret to Lizzie Lundie and Meg Merrilies.

———o———

Chapter xxx.

For my part, I think there is nothing so secret that shall not be brought to light within the world.—BURNET.

MRS ST CLAIR'S nerves almost failed her when she found herself alone with Lyndsay, for the first time since their meeting in the wood; but then the reflection that the secret connected with that scene was for ever buried in the deep (or, what was still deeper, her own heart), recalled her self-possession; and, without betraying any fear or hesitation, she began—

"It must doubtless appear extraordinary to you that I should have allowed so much time to elapse without giving you the *eclaircissement* which you must naturally have expected."

"Which I was promised," said Lyndsay, emphatically.

"True, you were so; but my own illness, the subsequent events which have taken place in the family,

rendered the performance of such a promise, for a time, impracticable; since then it has become unnecessary. The person who was the cause of so much needless alarm to my daughter and myself is no more; he has perished at sea—you must have observed in a late newspaper the detail of the shipwreck, and probably drew from it the same conclusion, that the wrong-headed, infatuated man, who had caused us so much annoyance, had met his fate."

"Yes, so far I did conjecture; but the circumstances which seemed to have placed Lady Rossville and you so completely in the power of such a man—you surely do not mean to leave these to conjecture?"

"It is certainly not every one on whose candour, and liberality, and charity, I could place such reliance as to leave a shadow of doubt on their minds which it was in my power to clear away; but when I balance, on the one hand, the painful task I should have to perform in recurring to past events—in disturbing the ashes of the departed—in harrowing up my own feelings, by recalling the unmerited obloquy, the poverty, and privations my unfortunate husband was doomed to endure, in consequence of his ill-fated attachment to me—can I—ought mine to be the hand to tear aside the veil in which his errors are now for ever shrouded? On the other, what have I to dread from a nature so honourable and candid as yours—one which I believe to be as incapable of suspecting evil as of committing it?"

"I fear you give me credit for an extent of virtue I do not possess," said Lyndsay, gravely; "for I must freely confess that I have received impressions of so unfavourable a nature that I find all my charity quite insufficient to dispel them. Surely, then, justice is due to the living, as well as tenderness to the dead."

"You say true; and rather than that my daughter should suffer in your estimation——" Mrs St Clair stopped and sighed.—"Yet I flattered myself that, with the thousand opportunities I have lately afforded you of gaining a thorough insight into her character, and of witnessing the almost childish openness of her disposition, you would ere now have been enabled, from your own knowledge of her (an infinitely surer criterion than a mother's commendation), to have acquitted her of all culpability in this unfortunate occurrence, ambiguous as it may appear."

"My suspicions do not, in the least degree, attach to Lady Rossville," cried Lyndsay, warmly; "I could stake my life on the purity of her mind and conduct—but——"

"But you distrust me.—Well, be it so; since my daughter does not suffer, I am satisfied. Let mine be the obloquy—only let me screen from reproach the memory of my husband."

"I am little used to disguise my sentiments," said Lyndsay;—"and the present occasion, I think, warrants my expressing them very plainly. You must excuse me, then, when I say, that I can scarcely conceive any motive so powerful as to induce a mother to endanger her own and her daughter's reputation. I have twice seen Lady Rossville insulted—had I possessed the power, she should certainly have been under other protection before now."

Mrs St Clair coloured deeply, and struggled for some moments to retain her composure; but she succeeded, and resumed—

"I was aware that such must be your opinion—and, mortifying as it is, I shall make no attempt to change it at present. Hereafter, perhaps, you may do me justice; in the meantime, it is my determination to resign the guardianship of my daughter into other hands.

It is my wish, and that of Lady Rossville, that Mr Lyndsay should accept this trust—the strongest proof we can either of us give of our own self-respect, as well as our confidence and esteem for him."

Mr Lyndsay's emotion at this proposal did not escape Mrs St Clair's piercing observation, and she secretly hoped he might decline the proposal; but, after a few minutes' consideration, he said—

"I accept of the trust, and hope I may be enabled to discharge it faithfully—but I cannot take the whole responsibility of such an office; there must be other guardians appointed."

"My daughter insists upon my acting also in that capacity, although it was my wish to have delegated the office entirely to others—to my brother, for instance, or my nephew, Major Waddell, or any other of the county gentlemen she would name—but she is immovable on that point; so we have only to consider hereafter who it will be proper to make choice of. Meanwhile, allow me to consider you as the actual guardian of my daughter, and as such anxious to co-operate with me in all that is for her advantage;" and Mrs St Clair went over pretty much the same ground she had done before, in painting the anticipated miseries of her union with Colonel Delmour—aggravated, too, by his late evasive conduct—the whole concluding with, "Had his absence been prolonged but for a few months, this childish fancy would have passed away—a more rational and more enduring attachment would have taken its place. Already, I sometimes flattered myself, the work was begun;"—and she sighed as she fixed her eyes on Lyndsay, whose changing expression and varying colour spoke the feelings he would not for worlds have uttered.—"And now what is to be done? Separated they must be, and that without delay; for while they are suffered to remain together, his influence will

prevail over every other.—Already his ascendency is obvious—every day, every hour spent together, will only serve to strengthen it.—My authority singly will be of no avail to counteract it—but you possess weight and influence with Gertrude——"

"Which I have neither the right nor the inclination to use at present. Rashness and violence can serve no purpose but to increase opposition. Rely upon Lady Rossville's promise not to marry"—and Lyndsay's voice faltered a little as he said it—"till she is of age. In the meantime, treat her with openness and confidence; these will prove firmer holds than bolts or bars with a nature such as hers—suffer her mind to expand, and her judgment to mature. Suffer the slow but gradual process of mental elucidation to go on—let her see others perhaps as gifted as Colonel Delmour, and leave her free to form her own opinions and draw her own conclusions—perhaps, when she knows him better, she will learn to value him less—but any attempt to force a mind such as hers against its own bent will never succeed. You may gall and fret her temper, but you will not change, or at least improve her nature, and I will never consent to any measures of the kind."

This was very contrary to what Mrs St Clair had anticipated. She had flattered herself that he would have caught eagerly at the bait thrown out, and would have been ready to assist her in any scheme she might have suggested for the separation of the lovers. But Lyndsay's mind was much too noble and generous to allow any selfish considerations for a moment to sway him, even where the temptation was most powerful. He had no base passions to gratify,—neither envy, nor jealousy, nor revenge; and, consequently, his decisions were always just and upright. But it was far otherwise with Mrs St Clair, and she was provoked and disappointed at having failed to stimulate him to co-operate

with her in the violent measures she had projected. She was aware, however, that it would be in vain to oppose the Countess and him together, and she was therefore obliged to yield an unwilling assent for the present.

Lady Rossville was now summoned to the conference; and the result was, that Lord Millbank and Mr Alexander Black should be requested to accept the office of joint guardians along with Mrs St Clair and Mr Lyndsay.

"As there are now no secrets amongst us, Gertrude," said her mother, in her most ostentatious manner, waving her hand to Mr Lyndsay, "I may inform you, that it has been agreed upon by Mr Lyndsay and myself that Colonel Delmour shall be permitted to remain here for the present, on the footing of any other guest—such is the confidence we both place in your good sense and propriety."

Lady Rossville blushed at this extraordinary address, and both Lyndsay and she turned away their eyes from each other.

"It would be a strange assumption of brief authority in me," said he, "were I to presume to interfere with Lady Rossville in the choice of her guests;" and with a slight inclination of the head, he quitted the room.

"What a load has been taken from my mind by this arrangement!" said Mrs St Clair, with a sigh, which rather belied her words; "and now, Gertrude, love, will you order the carriage, or shall I? We must pay some visits—in particular, we must go to my brother's. Mr Lyndsay has promised to ride to Lord Milibank's this morning, and settle matters with him. He is a stupid man; but it seems he is a relation of yours, and understands business, so he may do very well. As for your uncle, 'tis proper you should see him yourself. I don't think you have been at Bellevue since Lord Rossville's death?"

"But this morning is so delightful, it would be a sin to waste it on a dull drive to Bellevue; a much worse one might serve equally well for that purpose, and there are a thousand things I have to do to-day—I must see what progress has been made with my rustic bridge—whether the terrace-walk has yet been begun—how speeds my bower—if my flower-knots are arranging according to rule—apropos, mamma, what a lack of shrubs and flowers are here! I must have quantities immediately—not a day must be lost. I must have clouds of dropping roses to meet this 'ethereal mildness,' and do all honour to this gentlest of gentle springs."

"Don't be a fool, Gertrude; or, at least, remember there is a time for all things—even for folly. The present belongs to more important subjects than building baby-houses, and dressing dolls."

"Well, mamma, pray manage them as you will, but leave me at liberty to have a walk to-day."

"And who, pray, is to be your escort in this important survey?"

Lady Rossville blushed and hesitated, then, in a faint voice, said, "Anybody, mamma."

"But Lady Rossville is not to ramble all over the country with anybody or everybody," said her mother, sarcastically; "I will have no clandestine meetings, remember."

"Clandestine!" repeated the Countess, "no; with my own guests and relations, why should I have recourse to clandestine measures? My intention was to walk with Colonel Delmour; but since it is your desire that I should accompany you, I will do so;" and she rose to ring the bell and order the carriage, when the movement was arrested by hearing the sound of wheels crisping the gravel, as they rolled slowly round to the grand entrance. "Ah! there are my aunts!" exclaimed Lady Rossville. "I wrote yesterday to invite

them, but I scarcely looked for them so soon. I must fly to welcome them ; " and in an instant she was on the outer steps of the entrance, ready to assist her aunt Mary herself.

——o——

Chapter xxj.

These Indian wives are loving fools, and may do well to keep company with the Arrias and Portias of old Rome.—DRYDEN.

BUT the carriage door being opened, there stepped out Major Waddell, having upon his back a vast military cloak, with all its various appliances of tags, and jags, and flags, and waving capes, and scarlet linings, and shining brooch, &c. &c. &c. The Major having placed himself on one side of the carriage door, black Cæsar, in no less gorgeous array, stationed himself at the other ; and then, after a little feminine delay, there came forth Mrs Major Waddell in all her bravery. A rich and voluminous satin mantle enveloped her person ; a rare and costly lace veil streamed like a meteor to the wind ; muff, bonnet, feathers, boots, reticule—all were in perfect keeping ; and Mrs Major Waddell, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, might have stood for the frontispiece of *La Belle Assemblée*.

Placing a hand upon each of her supporters, she descended the steps of the carriage with much deliberate dignity ; and then, as if oppressed with the weight of her own magnificence, she gave her muff to Cæsar, while the Major gallantly seized her reticule, and assisted her to ascend the flight of steps, where stood Gertrude, provoked at herself for her precipitation in having so unwarily hastened to receive this unexpected importation.

" Well cousin, this is really kind ! " exclaimed Mrs

Major: "but you see what it is to be without a lord and master. Here is mine would be in perfect agonies if I were to stand for a single moment outside the door without my bonnet."

"You ought to tell Lady Rossville, at the same time, who it was tied two double neck-cloths round my throat yesterday, when——"

But Lady Rossville could not listen to the Major's playful recrimination, and she interrupted him by saying, with a somewhat stately air—

"I imagined it was my aunt Mary who had arrived; and knowing how helpless she is, I hastened out to see that she was properly attended to.—But my friends are all welcome," added she, with her usual sweetness of manner, and she led the way to the saloon.

Mrs Waddell was a prize to Lady Betty and Miss Pratt, who were both fond of seeing fine-dressed people; and Mrs Waddell had so much to look at, and her things were all so new, and so rich, and so fashionable; and India muslin, and India shawls, and India chains, and lace, and trinkets, were heaped upon her with such an unsparing hand, that it was quite a feast to sit and scan each article individually. Miss Pratt even went farther, and anticipated, at the least, half a piece of sprigged India muslin to herself, the same as Mrs Waddell's gown, which she forthwith began to admire with all her might. Moreover, she intended to ingratiate herself so far as to obtain a footing in the house, for, as she reasoned with herself, there was nobody knew good living better than your nabobs; they were commonly squeamish and bilious, and needed a nice bit; and, at any rate, one might depend upon genuine Mullagatawney and Madeira at their tables, and, to a used stomach, these were great restoratives, for a fortnight or so, now and then. Miss Pratt, thereupon, began to do the honours with

even more than her usual activity. She made a point of taking off Mrs Waddell's mantle with her own hands, commenting upon its beauty as she did so; she insisted upon her using a footstool, and having two additional squab-cushions to lean upon, and pressed a cup of chocolate in a manner not to be withstood. She was obliged to give back a little, however, when Mrs St Clair came sweeping in, with her usual authoritative air, and welcomed her relations with a patronising grandeur of deportment that sunk Miss Pratt's nimble civilities into nothing.

Mrs St Clair was vulgar enough to feel gratified by the appearance made by her niece. Her equipage was handsome—her dress fashionable and expensive—she herself very pretty; the Major's rank was respectable—his connections were good—and though they were both fools, yet a fool in satin was a very different thing from a fool in sackcloth, and was treated accordingly. She therefore began, "I observe your carriage has not been put up, Isabella; surely Major Waddell and you have not come so far to pay us a mere morning visit? Gertrude, you must endeavour to persuade your cousins——"

"The best of all persuasions," said Miss Pratt, "is to order the horses to be put up; that's a sure argument—is it not, Major? Let me pull the bell, Lady Rossville."

"Why, to tell you the truth, the Major and I had agreed before we set out, that if we found you living quietly here, and no company, we would have no objection to spend a day or two with you *en famille*;—but, as I go nowhere at present, it must be upon condition that I remain quite incog."

Mrs St Clair already repented of her invitation; and Gertrude could only say, "We are quite a family party."

"In that case then, Major, I think we must remain where we are. You had better speak to Robert yourself about the horses, and tell Cæsar to see that every thing is taken out of the carriage. As we were quite uncertain of remaining, I didn't think of bringing my own maid with me—and, Major, I think I must have left my vinaigrette in one of the pockets of the carriage; when one travels in their own carriage, they are so apt to litter it, you know, and leave things lying about, that really mine is almost like my dressing-room."

"A very handsome carriage it is," said Miss Pratt, as it wheeled past the windows.

"Very plain—but the Major and I are both partial to every thing plain."

This plainness consisted in a bright blue body, with large scarlet arms, bearing the Black and Waddell quarterings, mantle, crest, cypher, couped gules, and all appliances to boot.

"By-the-by, I hear strange things of my poor uncle," said Mrs Major, when the carriage was out of sight,—"I'm told, cousin, you found him all but dead in his own house, and had him carried away in a fit. The Major and I were from home at the time;—we were on a visit at Lord Fairacre's, and heard nothing of it till two days ago, that we returned, or I should certainly have made a point of seeing after him, poor man.—He is not confined to bed, I hope?—does he know we are here, I wonder?"

"I shall let him know myself," said Lady Rossville; who instantly conjectured, that if uncle Adam came unwarily to the knowledge of the Major and lady being under the same roof with himself, stone and lime would scarcely contain him. She, therefore (glad, at the same time, of an excuse for leaving her company), hastened to the yellow turret. She tapped several

times at the door, but received no answer—she listened, all was silent—she slowly opened the door, no notice was taken—she looked in; and there sat uncle Adam, with spectacles on nose, so intent upon a book, that all his senses seemed to be completely lapt in its pages. Gertrude coughed, but in vain—she spoke, but it was to the walls—she went close up to him, but he saw her not—at length she ventured to lay her hand on his shoulder, and Guy Mannering dropt upon the floor.

"You seem to be much interested in your studies," said Lady Rossville, as she stooped to pick it up for him.

Mr Ramsay purpled with shame, as he tried to affect a tone of indifference, and said, "Oo—I—hem—it's just a wheen idle havers there that I—just—hem—they maun hae little to do that tak up their heads writing sic nonsense."

"I never heard the author accused of idleness before," said Lady Rossville, with a smile; "and no one need be ashamed to own the interest excited by these wonderful works of genius."

"Interest—hugh!—Folk may hae other things to interest them, I think, in this world. I wonder if there's ony o't true? I canna think how ae man could sit down to contrive a' that. I dinna misdoot that scoondrel Glossin' at a'. I would gie a thoosand pound out o' my pocket to see that rascal hanged, if hanging wasna ower gude for him!"

"Well, you may be at ease on that head, as even worse befalls him," said Lady Rossville.

"Weel, I rejoice at that; for if that scoondrel had gotten leave to keep that property, by my troth, I believe, I would have burnt the book;"—then, ashamed of his ardour in such a cause, he added, in a peevish tone—"But its a' nonsense thegither, and I'm no gaun to fash my head ony mair about it."

Lady Rossville now announced the arrival of the Waddells in the most conciliating manner she could; but in any way it was an event to rouse all uncle Adam's angry feelings, though for some minutes he said nothing, but merely walked round and round the turret, rubbing his forehead, as if at a loss how to proceed. At last he stopped and said—

"I ken weel enough what's brought them here. That creature, though she is a fule, has the cunning o' auld nick himsel'; but ye may just tell her frae me she'll mak naething o' me—she shall ne'er see ae bawbee o' mine; you may just tell her that."

Gertrude here attempted a sort of vindication of her cousin from such debasing suspicions; but she was cut short with,—

"Weel, if ye winna tell her, I'll tell her mysel'. I'm no gaun to be hunted up and down, in and out, that I canna turn mysel', but Maister and Mrs Major Waddell maun be at my heels;" and he resumed his perambulations, as if to give the lie to his words by his actions.

"I'm just switherin'," resumed he, "whether to quit the hoose this minute, or whether to stay still and see the creaters oot o't;" then, as his eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, glanced from Lizzie Lundie to Guy Mannering, he added, "But I'll no gie them the satisfaction o' thinking they hae driven me awa. I daursay that's just what she wants; so I'll stay still where I am."

This magnanimous resolution formed, Lady Rossville tried to prevail upon him to return to the saloon with her to meet his relatives, but in vain; he declared, that till dinner was on the table, he would not stir from where he was, and Lady Rossville, who had too much sense to attempt to combat his prejudices openly, was obliged to leave him, and make the best excuse she

could for his non-appearance. No sooner had she left the room than Mr Ramsay locked and bolted the door, to prevent any further intrusion ; and after a few glances at Lizzie, his ruffled pinions were smoothed, and he returned with unabated ardour to his studies.

Colonel Delmour and Mr Lyndsay had both joined the party during Gertrude's absence ; and she again felt something like shame as she marked her lover's lofty bearing towards her relations, while the Major seemed to grow ten times sillier, and his lady twenty times more affected in their struggles to keep on par with him. With Lyndsay it was otherwise ; for although his manners were not less elegant, yet, as they emanated from better feelings, so they never oppressed others with the painful consciousness of their own inferiority ; and even the Major and lady in his company might have become something better, had not his benign influence been counteracted by the haughty port and humiliating condescension of the other. But his horses had been some time announced, and he set out upon his ride to Millbank House.

"Do you know I begin to think Mr Lyndsay really quite handsome, and his manners extremely pleasing," said Mrs Major, with an air as though her approbation set the seal to him at once.

"He sits his horse remarkably well," said the Major; "I wonder whether he ever was in the dragoons?"

"Do you walk to-day, Lady Rossville?" demanded Colonel Delmour, abruptly.

As the expedition to Bellevue was now given up, Gertrude answered in the affirmative, and invited Mrs Waddell to be of the party.

"O, you must first get my lord and master's leave for that.—Major, what would you think of my taking a walk to-day?" looking very archly at the rest of the company.

The Major looked distressed.

"Why, you know, Isabella, the very last time you walked was to see Lord Fairacre's new pinery, and you certainly caught cold; for you may remember Lady Fairacre remarked next morning how heavy your eyes were, and I think you look a little pale to-day, my love."

"There now! I knew how it would be. You see how completely I am under orders. However, I beg I mayn't prevent you from indulging your taste in a rural stroll—with your beau," added she in a whisper, to Lady Rossville, who, ashamed and wearied of such intolerable folly, rose and went to prepare for a walk, at the same time, in a general way, inviting such of the party as chose to accompany her.

On returning she found the party was to consist of herself and the two gentlemen. Lady Betty and Mrs St Clair (like Mrs Waddell) never walked when they could help it; and Miss Pratt had attached herself so assiduously to the nabobess, and had so much to tell and to say, that, contrary to her usual practice, she was a fixture for the day.

"Major Waddell," cried Mrs St Clair, in her most authoritative manner, as they were leaving the room, "remember I commit Lady Rossville solely to your care—Gertrude, you will be at pains to point out to Major Waddell the beauties of Rossville, and get his opinion of the improvements you have begun."

"You see what you have brought upon yourself, Major, by your care of me," cried his lady, not much delighted with this arrangement, which she thought was rather interfering with her privileges.

Lady Rossville and Colonel Delmour were too much annoyed at this appendage to say any thing; the latter, indeed, was revolving in his own mind

how to dismiss him the moment they were out of sight, and the Countess was hesitating whether she should do more than merely take a single turn before the house under such guardianship, when, as they crossed the hall, Mrs Waddell's voice was heard loudly calling the Major back; and the lady herself presently appeared, in great agitation.

"Now, Major, is it possible you were really going out without your cloak, when you know very well you was so hoarse this morning that I could scarcely hear what you said?"

"Well, for Heaven's sake, compose yourself, my dear girl," said the Major, in a whisper.

"Now, Major, that is impossible, unless you put on your cloak."

"But, I assure you, I am much more likely to catch cold with my cloak than without it. Why, this is almost like a day in Bengal. I do assure you my cloak would be quite overcoming."

"Now Major——"

"Well, well, my dear, don't say any more. Do, I beseech you, compose yourself;—but this cloak is so confoundedly heavy—do just feel it."

"Now, Major——"

"Well, no matter, my dear; any thing to make you easy;" and the poor Major buckled on his apparatus, while the lady set up the collar, clasped the brooch, and drew the voluminous folds close round his person, already bursting at every pore.

"Now, Major, be sure you keep it close round you, and, for any sake, don't open your collar.—Do you promise?"

"But, my dear Bell——"

"Well, Major, I can only say——"

"Well, well," gasped the poor Major, "that is enough."

"There now, I feel quite comfortable," said the lady, as she completed her operations.

"It is more than I do," thought the Major, as he slowly sallied forth, and caught a glimpse of Lady Rossville and Colonel Delmour, who had taken advantage of this conjugal delay to make their escape. "So my companions have got the start of me;" and he footed away as fast as his short legs and ponderous cloak permitted. But in vain, like panting Time, did he toil after the fugitives, whose light figures and elastic steps mocked his utmost exertions to overtake them; and the provoking part of it was, that while he was puffing and blowing, and sawing the air with his arms, without ever gaining a single step upon them, they had the appearance of sauntering along quite at their ease, and deaf to his repeated calls.

Chapter xxij.

Oh! sooner shall the rose of May
Mistake her own sweet nightingale,
And to some meaner minstrel's lay
Open her bosom's glowing veil,
Than Love shall ever doubt a tone,
A breath of the beloved one!

LALLA ROOKH.

MEANWHILE the lovers had much to say to each other; but, for a time, the eloquence and the vehemence of Colonel Delmour bore down the softer accents of the Countess, as he pleaded his suit in all the energy of passion, and appealed to herself as a witness of the injurious treatment he met with from Mrs St Clair. But when he proceeded to urge an immediate union, as the only means of putting an end to the machinations against him, she stopped him by

saying, "Do not renew that subject again for years to come, as you love me—I have promised my mother that I will enter into no engagement till I am twenty-one, but I promise you then——"

"Then," interrupted Delmour, impetuously,—"that is a mere mockery. Gertrude, if you loved as I do, you would not talk so calmly of what *may* be years hence—every day seems to me an eternity, until you are mine beyond the power of fate to separate us. Years! better tell me at once that I have nothing to hope: despair itself would be almost a blessing compared to this intolerable agony of suspense."

"Ah! Delmour, why should you be so unjust to yourself and me as to talk thus!—I have no doubts of your faith and constancy, why should you have any of mine?"

"Because no one can love as I do to distraction, without inquietude—passion without passion is an anomaly I cannot comprehend."

"And love without confidence in the person beloved seems to me still more inconceivable; I have no more doubt of your fidelity than I have of my own."

"But every thing will be done to destroy your confidence in me—your mother is ambitious, Gertrude; she wants a more splendid alliance for you; she thinks I am unworthy of you, and perhaps she is right."

"But in that I must judge for myself, and she knows my choice is made," said the Countess with a blush.

"But not confirmed.—Ah! Gertrude, would to Heaven you loved as I do!—that you could conceive the miseries of separation—the worse than death it will be to me to part from you!"

"But we shall see each other frequently—you must give up the army—you must not go abroad again—in-

deed you must not—and then two years will soon pass away."

"And in that time what may not be effected by the misrepresentations of your mother, and the artful insinuations of that cold-blooded stoic, Lyndsay?"

"You wrong your cousin, indeed you do, by such a supposition—he is far above any thing of the kind."

"Has he never once said any thing that had a tendency to injure me in your estimation?" demanded Colonel Delmour, turning his eyes full upon her.

"If he had, he has certainly been very unsuccessful," said the Countess with a smile; "but, indeed, Edward is incapable of meanly insinuating——"

"What! he spoke out, then?" exclaimed Delmour, passionately; "he told you of the follies and the extravagances of my boyish days, in which, however, he himself went hand in hand—and exaggerated them into vices—and warned you to beware of the profligate who had lost I forget how many hundred pounds one night at cards?"

"No, indeed, he told me nothing of all this—you wrong him—you misunderstand each other; but you must be better friends, now that he is my guardian."

"Your guardian!" exclaimed Delmour, as if thunderstruck; "what, in the name of Heaven, do you mean?"

"Even that it seems it was necessary for me to have guardians appointed, and so I have made choice of my cousin for one: he has already proved himself my friend on more occasions than one, and to him, I think, I owe my life; you cannot, therefore, wonder at my choice."

"Yet you must be aware that Lyndsay is no friend to me, nor—I confess it—am I to him: we think differently upon most subjects, and his creed is much too bigoted and intolerant for me."

"Indeed, I have not found him so; on the contrary, I should say he was extremely liberal in his sentiments, and lenient in his judgments; and, I am sure, he has a great deal more toleration than I have. I wish I saw you both better friends—why should it not be so?"

"Because I am no hypocrite, Gertrude; and, perhaps, also, because—shall I confess my weakness to you?—I am jealous that you should bestow so much of your regard upon him."

"Jealous of my regard for Edward Lyndsay!" exclaimed the Countess; "then you would be jealous if I had a brother whom I loved?"

"Yes, I believe I should. When a man loves, as I do, to adoration, he can seldom brook any interference in those affections which ought to be exclusively his own: your lukewarm sort of people, I know, make all welcome; but I am not one of those. Ah! Gertrude, woman's heart is, indeed, a royal palace, if it admit but one guest, and then 'tis a glorious privilege to be that one!"

"Nay, you would rather turn it into a cell, I think," said Gertrude, smiling, "and become yourself a moping monk."

"No matter what it is, provided it is mine—solely and exclusively mine," returned Delmour, impatiently.

"But being yours, wholly yours," said the Countess, and she blushed at the tone of emphatic tenderness with which she said it, "surely you would not wish it to be unjust and ungrateful to all the world beside—such a thing would be no better worth having than this pebble on which I tread," as she touched one with her foot.

"Do not blame me, Gertrude, because conscious that I possess a pearl richer than all its tribe I fear to leave it open to all, lest even a part of it should be

stolen from me.—Common things may be shared—but who could lose the hundredth part of a rare and costly gem, without feeling that its value was gone? Even such a miser am I with your affections. You are all the universe to me; day and night I think, I dream but of you—a desert island in the midst of the ocean with you would be a paradise. Gertrude, if you shared in these feelings, how little would you think or care for others in comparison."

"Alas! you little know—but how shall I convince you, sceptic as you are, of my—folly?" added she with a smile; "you would not have me perjured, and to my mother!—or drive from my house a friend and relation, to whom I owe so much—or retract my word passed to him, when I chose him for my guardian?"

Colonel Delmour remained silent.

"Surely you would not have me so base as to do any of those things, nor would you value such proofs of my attachment."

Colonel Delmour found he had gone far enough for the present, and that, gentle and feminine as Gertrude was, his influence over her mind must be more gradual than he had expected. He saw that he was beloved with all the fervour and simplicity of a young confiding heart—but love with her was yet too pure and unsullied a passion to have tainted the better feelings of her nature. These still flowed free and generous—she loved and was beloved, and her heart expanded beneath the joyous influence, and the bright rainbow hues of hope and fancy tinged every object with their own celestial colours. But no shade of suspicion or mistrust fell on the noontide of her happiness. Even the narrow, selfish, domineering sentiments she had just heard fall from the lips of her lover, seemed to her to breathe only the quintessence of love, and she looked on him in all the calm radiance of a happy trusting heart.

"Be it as you will, Gertrude," said he, "my fate is in your hands—you know your power, for I have told you what I am—proud, jealous, vindictive, perhaps, where you are concerned; but such as I am you have vowed to be mine—have you not?"

"When I am twenty-one—that is, unless you should change your mind," added she sportively.

"I change!" repeated he; "no, Gertrude; you will see many a strange sight before that comes to pass—this river may change its course, and these rocks may change into plains, but my heart can never change in its love for you."

Much more of the same sort passed; for lovers, it is well known, carry the art of tautology to its utmost perfection, and even the most impatient of them can both bear to hear and repeat the same things times without number, till the sound becomes the echo to the sense or the nonsense previously uttered. But lovers' walks and lovers' vows must have an end, and Lady Rossville and Colonel Delmour found themselves at the castle ere they had uttered one hundredth part of all they had to say.

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Chapter xxiij.

Hot from the field, indulge not yet your limbs
In wish'd repose; nor court the fanning gale,
Nor taste the spring. Oh! by the sacred tears
Of widows, mothers, sisters, aunts, forbear!

ARMSTRONG.

"WHAT have you done with the Major?" exclaimed his lady, as they entered the saloon, and found her and Miss Pratt with their heads together.

Gertrude was at a loss how to answer this question,

as, till this moment, she had as completely forgot the Major as though no such a person were in existence.

"Where in the world is the Major?" was repeated, in a voice of alarm.

"Very snug in his cloak, probably," answered Colonel Delmour, with a disdainful smile.

"Lady Rossville—cousin, I entreat of you, say what has become of the Major?"

"I dare say he is not far off," answered the Countess; "but he did not overtake us."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the lady, all panting with alarm, "did he not overtake you? Then the Major is lost!"

"My dear Mrs Waddell, don't distress yourself," began Miss Pratt;—"depend upon it he'll cast up; there's good daylight yet, and he may meet some of the work people in the woods; and we'll send out some of the servants to seek for him. Colonel Delmour, will you pull the bell? He never would think of taking the Crow-Foot Crag, and that's the only ugly turn about the banks—Lady Rossville, I'll thank you for the smelling-bottle there—there's not much water in the river just now—Jackson, a glass of water here as quick's you can, and send out some of the men to look for Major Waddell——"

"With bells, ropes, and lanthorns," said Colonel Delmour.

"There is Major Waddell, ma'am," said the pompous Jackson, as he glanced his eye, but without turning his head, towards the window.

"Where—Oh! where?" exclaimed his lady, as she flew to the window.—"Thank Heaven!" as she again sunk upon her seat.

The Major it certainly was *in propria persona*, slowly and laboriously plodding his weary way, close buttoned to the chin, though evidently ready

to drop with heat and fatigue. He carried a handkerchief in his hand, which he ever and anon applied to his face, which shone forth like a piece of polished yew. To add to his perturbation, Miss Pratt, throwing open a window, screeched out to him—

"Come away, Major, make haste;—here's your good lady almost in hysterics about you."

The poor Major, uttering an ejaculation of despair, did his utmost to mend his pace; and again the drooping capes, arms, sails, and tails of his cloak were all in commotion, as the inward man struggled and plunged amidst the toils of broad-cloth and timmen, till at length the whole mass came floundering into the room.

"O, Major!" exclaimed his lady faintly, as she rose to meet him.

"My sweet girl, what is all this?" cried the Major, as he cast back part of his folds, and extended his arms like claws towards her.

"I have been *so* frightened about you, Major! You *must* have met with something; you are so heated, and —do tell me what has happened—I see you have met with something!"

"My dearest girl, I do assure you I have met with nothing. I have been rather on a wild-goose chase to be sure, trying to overtake my charge, the Countess there; but," turning to Colonel Delmour and her, "I could not make you hear me at all, though I had you in sight almost all the way." At this remark there was a smile on Colonel Delmour's lip, and a slight blush on Lady Rossville's cheek, which Miss Pratt did not like, and a sort of vague tremor ran through her frame.

"That was very odd," said Mrs Major, recovering, —"I never doubted you were all together.—I shall take care another time how I trust you to walk without me.

—O! you have got yourself heated to such a degree, I am sure you will catch your death of cold.—Pray, Miss Pratt, shut down that window;—now, Major, do sit away from the door, and, I beseech you, don't think of taking off your cloak till you are cooler."

"My dear Bell," gasped the almost suffocated Major.

"Now, Major, I entreat of you——"

"But—'pon my soul, this is a thousand degrees hotter than ever I felt it in Bengal."

"Well—but, Major, you know very well how ill you were in consequence of throwing off your cloak suddenly one sunny day, when you had got yourself over-heated, and you promised me that you never would do so again."

"But, my dear Bell, this is absolutely like a day in June."

"Now, Major, I can only say——"

But happily for all concerned, the lady's sayings were here stopped by the sound of the dressing-bell; and half-distracted between her desire to superintend the cooling of the Major by keeping him in a hot room enveloped in his cloak, and her anxiety to dedicate the full three-quarters of an hour to the duties of her toilet and the display of her oriental finery, she felt much at a loss which to choose—at length the woman prevailed over the wife; and the Major was allowed to betake himself to his dressing-room, while the lady repaired to hers.

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Chapter lxxiv.

Ah! sure as Hindu legends tell,
When music's tones the bosom swell,
The scenes of former life return,
Ere, sunk beneath the morning star,
We left our parent climes afar,
Immured in mortal forms to mourn.

Or if, as ancient sages ween,
Departed spirits, half unseen,
Can mingle with the mortal throng,
'Tis when from heart to heart we roll
The deep-toned music of the soul
That warbles in our Scottish song.

LEYDEN.

AT dinner Mrs Major reappeared in a dress which might have done honour to Cinderella's god-mother; but which, even with the aid of Hyder Ally's carbuncle, had no effect in subduing uncle Adam's flinty heart towards her. He, however, received her salutations with tolerable composure, and, moreover, permitted her to touch his hands; but as for shaking them, that required an effort little short of tearing the limpet from its native rock. As for the Major, he was too much exhausted by the toils of the day to be able even to offend, being reduced to a state of perfect passiveness.

"What a pretty woman your niece, Mrs Waddell, is," whispered Miss Pratt, as uncle Adam and she stotted along, as usual, to dinner.

"Pretty!—what makes her pretty?—wi' a face like a sooket carvy!"

"Ah! to be sure, she's not like Lady Rossville; but where will you see the like of her, such a distinguished-looking creature as she is? for you see, although she has but that bit myrtle in her hair that

she brought in her hand from the greenhouse before dinner, how much better her head looks than Mrs Waddell's, with that fine pearl-sprig that must have cost many a gold rupee;—as Anthony Whyte would say, she's really very classical."

"I wish you wud nae compare them," interrupted Mr Ramsay impatiently; as his temper was still farther irritated at seeing the haughty but graceful air with which Colonel Delmour led the Countess to the top of the table, and, as a matter of course, placed himself by her.

"There's a bold stroke for a wife playing there; but it won't do," again responded Miss Pratt, with a slight palpitation at the heart; which she would have scorned, however, to have admitted, even to herself.

Dinners are uncommonly dull things, unless when there is some *bel esprit* to take the lead, and act as *sauce piquante* to the company; but here was nobody (except Miss Pratt) who could or would lay themselves out to talk; and even she was somewhat damped, as the thoughts of her five guineas came across her, now and then, with a qualm. As if to counteract that, her chief business was in calling forth, and then construing, Lady Rossville's most common civilities towards Mr Lyndsay, to the great annoyance of both, and the repressed indignation of Colonel Delmour.

Mrs Waddell thought neither the Major nor she met with that attention that was their due. She, therefore, sat very stately with Hyder Ally's carbuncle, emitting dark and lurid gleams, as if it shared in her displeasure. In the evening it was somewhat better, though, in any way, it was difficult to get such incongruous materials as the company was composed of to hang together. But then they were more at liberty to follow their own devices; and if music has not always charms to soothe a savage breast, it has at least the merit of keeping civilised beings sometimes in order. Although Lady

Rossville had little expectation of deriving any pleasure from an exhibition of Mrs Waddell's musical powers, yet she was too polite to pass her over.

"Pray sing me a Scotch song," said she, seeing her preparing to *execute* an Italian one; "I have taken quite a fancy for Scotch songs."

"Scotch songs!" repeated Mrs Waddell, with astonishment and contempt; "I hope, cousin, you don't think me *quite* so vulgar as to sing Scotch songs. I assure you, they are quite exploded from the drawing-room now: they are called kitchen songs," with an affected giggle.

"Call them what they will," said Lady Rossville, "I shall certainly learn to sing the songs of my own country, and to sing them, too, in my own way, *con amore*."

"If so, you will sing them better than any mere taught singer will do," said Mr Lyndsay.

"But, I assure you, cousin, nobody sings them now," said Mrs Major, vehemently.

"The more shame, then, to every body," said Gertrude.

"To every body who can sing them," said Mr Lyndsay; "but I believe it is much more difficult to sing one's national music well in their native land, than it is to 'discourse most eloquent music' in a foreign tongue: the first speaks to every one's heart and feelings; the other merely addresses itself to the ear or the taste, or, it may be, the ignorance of the audience. To sing Scotch songs well requires great compass of voice, a clear articulation, much taste, and the very soul of feeling."

"Pray, Mr Lyndsay, were you ever abroad?" demanded Mrs Waddell, abruptly.

"I spent two years on the Continent; one of them in Rome."

"Indeed!" in a manner as if she doubted the fact, and rather displeased to think that any body should have been where the Major had not been. "Well, I must say, I am rather surprised at any body who has ever been abroad being able to tolerate Scotch music. I think you say, Major, you have had little relish for it since you were in India."

"Oh! surely," said the Major, who just knew a drum from a fife.

"I like every thing that is good of its kind," said Lyndsay.

"Some of the Scotch airs are rather pretty," said Colonel Delmour, who, but for his abhorrence of Mrs Waddell, would have uttered an anathema against them.

"And I hope you admire the words?" said Mrs Waddell with an ironical air.

"Indeed I do many of them," said Lady Rossville. "Here, for instance, is such a pretty sentiment prettily expressed;" and, as she leant against her harp, she touched its chords, and sung with taste and feeling—

Wilt thou be my dearie?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
O, wilt thou let me cheer thee?
By the treasure of my soul,
And that's the love I bear thee.

"Well, I suppose it's my want of taste, for I can't say I can discover any thing very beautiful there," said Mrs Major, with a disdainful toss. "My dearie! what a vulgar expression! How should I look, Major, if you were to call me your dearie?"

"Ha! ha!—very good; but that is a charming thing you sing, my dear, '*Rosina mia caro*,'" said the Major, who was half asleep.

"Many of the Scotch songs are undoubtedly coarse,

vulgar, and silly," said Lyndsay; "and most of them sung from beginning to end would certainly be somewhat of a penance; but some of them are charming, and a verse here and a verse there, in almost all of them, will be found to possess infinite beauty and——"

"I thought people who were really musical cared little for the words of a song," interrupted Mrs Major triumphantly.

"Milton thought otherwise, and few will dispute his ear for music; but if words are not fit to be heard, they ought not to be sung. It by no means follows that because words are Scotch they must needs be vulgar; on the contrary, I have heard good musicians say, that, from the frequent termination of the Scotch words in vowels, there is a softness in the language which renders it much better adapted to music than any other, the Italian excepted; and then, what a superiority in the poetry of our songs! How little nature, feeling, or variety, is there in the greater part of the Italian ariettas and Venetian canzonettes."

"Did you ever hear '*Dee tentee pellpeetee?*'" asked Mrs Waddell, with a consequential air.

"Mr Lyndsay could scarcely restrain a smile at the question; "*Di tanti palpiti*" being scarcely less hackneyed than "The Flower of Dumblane," or "From the white-blossomed sloe," &c.

But, without waiting an answer, the lady forthwith squared her elbows, rounded her arms, spread out her fingers, and commenced, waving her head and rolling her eyes from side to side in the manner usually practised by vulgar affected singers, who try to make up by their bodily gestures for the want of all taste, feeling, and expression.

Colonel Delmour had been talking to Lady Rossville, in a low voice, during the greater part of this

colloquy, which otherwise he never would have suffered to proceed, as he seemed to look upon the Major and his lady as quite beneath his notice; and although he might have deigned to contradict, he never would have stooped to reason with either of them. When she began he certainly would have left the room, had not Gertrude's presence restrained him; not that her singing was more obnoxious to him than it was to Lyndsay; but the one was accustomed to consult only his own pleasure, the other to consider the feelings of others.

"What a store of pretty old Scotch songs your sister Anne has," said Lady Rossville, trying to gloss over the deficiencies of the one sister in the praises of the other.

"My sister Anne has a great store of nonsense in her head," said Mrs Waddell, with a toss of her own; "it is so stuffed with religion and poetry, I think, and with texts, and songs, and hymns, that there seems little room for good common sense."

"From your account, she must greatly resemble a little quaint simple sketch I have met with somewhere, and admired," said Lyndsay; "I think it is one of old Izaak Walton's. Speaking, I presume, of some such person, he says, 'To say truth, she is never alone; for she is still accompanied with old songs, honest thoughts, and prayers, but short ones.'"

"That seems to suit my cousin Anne exactly," said Lady Rossville; "she is very sweet and very pleasing, and, I am sure, very good. I wished her to have come here with my aunts; but she writes me she cannot be spared at present, and they will not be persuaded to leave home it seems—so we must do the best we can without them."

Colonel Delmour placed some music before her, and they sung Italian and French duetts for the rest of the

evening. Miss Pratt and Mr Ramsay battled away as usual at backgammon; but she was victorious, and again his suspicions of her recurred, and he thought—

"I wish she may be the thing after all; she kens owre weel how to shake the dice!"

—o—

Chapter xxvi.

Unless one could cure men of being fools, it is to no purpose to cure them of any folly, as it is only making room for some other.—Horace Walpole.

MRS WADDELL did not find herself at all at home at Rossville; except Lady Betty and Miss Pratt, nobody seemed to notice her finery. The simplicity of Lady Rossville's dress was felt to be impertinent towards her, a married woman, and the Major could not stand beside Colonel Delmour's lordly port and fashionable *nonchalance*.

Then, except at meals, there seemed no possibility of getting hold of uncle Adam, and there was no speaking to him before so many people; it was only exposing him, poor man, to observation, and the less he was called out the better. It was inconceivable, too, what he made of himself all day, there was no getting a private word of him; and, in short, the result was a determination to depart the following day. Fortune, however, seemed to favour her design on uncle Adam, as she found herself in the breakfast room with only him and the Major; none of the others of the party having yet appeared. She therefore accosted him in her most ingratiating manner, which was met, as usual, by a very cool response.

"It is very difficult to get a word of you, uncle, except

in the midst of these fine people. You seem always engaged — you are certainly composing something."

"Maybe I'm makin' my will," was the reply, in a manner most suspiciously calm and benign.

"Indeed! but I'm sure, uncle, you have no occasion to think of that just now. The Major and I were both remarking how uncommonly well you are looking—you were just saying to me yesterday, Major, that you really thought my uncle looked twenty years younger than he did last time you saw him."

"Yes, indeed, 'pon my word I think so."

"It's a sign that change of air agrees with you, uncle; so I hope you'll take a seat with the Major and me in our carriage, and accompany us to Thornbank. I assure you, I shall be quite affronted if you don't; after staying here so long, it will have a very odd appearance in the eyes of the world, if you pass the Major and me over, and me a married woman—and, besides, you know, uncle, if you really wish to do any thing about your property, though, I'm sure, there can be no hurry about that, you know you are much nearer the law people at Thornbank than here; and, indeed, Mr Aikinhead the advocate has promised us a visit this vacation, and perhaps you might like to advise with him before——"

"I thank you, but I need naebody's advice as to the disposal o' my ain property," replied uncle Adam, still preserving a sort of horrid supernatural mildness; "my mind's made up."

"Indeed! well I really think I should be at a loss how to dispose of such a charming property as Broom Park."

"But I'm at nane—I'm just gaun to mak' a mortification * o't."

* In Scotland an endowment is termed a mortification.

"A mortification of Broom Park!" repeated Mrs Waddell, in tones well suited to the words.

"A mortification, my dear sir!" ejaculated the Major.

"Yes, just a mortification—what is there wonderful in that?"

"Why, I must say, I think, uncle, considering——" gasped Mrs Waddell, vainly trying to preserve her unruffled dignity—"how much is done for the lower classes now, I really think the higher ranks stand quite as much in need of mortifications."

"I think sae, too; so it's lucky we're baith agreed."

"I can assure you, uncle, although it's a thing I would not choose to say to every body, the Major finds he has quite enough to do with his money."

"I dinna doot it."

"There is so much required now to support one's rank in the world, that, I assure you, it is no joke."

"Joke!—wha said it was a joke?"

"In short, uncle, I can assure you, in spite of the appearance we make in the eyes of the world, the Major and I both find ourselves pinched enough, and he now doubts very much about buying a place; although certainly Thornbank does not suit us in many respects—the house is very indifferent—we have only one drawing-room, and, with his connections, that is not the thing—and the garden is really a poor affair; so that, altogether, I am really anxious the Major should find another residence."

"He'll maybe find ane at Broom Park before it's lang," said uncle Adam, drily.

"O! uncle, I'm sure we never thought of that, and I thought you said you were going to make a mortification of it?"

"So I am—but it's to be a mortification, as you say, for the rich;—it's to be a mortification for thae miser-

able, unfortunate men, that are married to taupies and haverels that spend a' their substance for them."

Uncle Adam had here broke out into his natural manner; and there is no saying how much plainer he might have spoken, had he not, at that moment, been checked in his career by the entrance of Mr Lyndsay, who was the only person (strange as it may appear) for whom he felt any thing approaching to respect; but there was so much mildness and calmness of manner, with so much manly dignity in his deportment, that even uncle Adam was ashamed to behave ill before him. The rest of the party came dropping in, and Mrs Waddell, with her cheeks very red, was obliged to take her seat in silence; they gradually cooled, however, as she began to think it was just her uncle's way; he liked a rough joke, and so on; while the Major, for some little time, sat revolving whether he should not call upon the old man to say what he meant: if there was any thing personal in his allusion, he—but the poor Major, even to himself, could not say what he would do—at last he too gulped down the affront with his last cup of tea, and by the time breakfast was over both were ready to enter the lists again with uncle Adam.

Upon hearing of the proposed departure of the Major and lady, Gertrude said all that was necessary on the occasion; but she was too sincere to be pressing in her entreaties for them to prolong their stay; she felt that her relations were ridiculous, and she saw they were despised by Colonel Delmour. It was rather a relief, therefore, to hear they were going away. Any deficiencies on her part were, however, amply atoned for by Miss Pratt, who was vehement in her remonstrances; assuring them they had seen nothing of Rossville yet, that it was really no visit at all; people scarcely knew one another's faces till they had spent at least three days together, &c.

In spite of all that could be urged by Miss Pratt, however, the Major and lady remained fixed in their purpose to return home; all they would concede was to remain part of the morning, and the carriage and Cæsar were ordered to be in readiness accordingly.

The breakfast party, with the exception of Lyndsay, having lounged over their repast to the utmost length of procrastination, read their letters and newspapers, pampered their dogs, and, in short, done all that idle people do to kill time, even at his very outset, *en masse*, were severally sauntering away to try their skill individually, each their own way, when, as uncle Adam was retreating, Mrs Waddell followed him into the ante-room, and was as usual followed by the Major.

"Before we go, uncle, I wish to know if there is any thing I can do for you; since you don't seem inclined to accompany us at present—any message to Broom Park?—We shall pass close by it, you know; and by-the-by, uncle, I really wish you would give us an order of admittance there—it has a most extraordinary appearance in the eyes of the world that the Major has never yet been within your gate."

"O, my dear Bell! you know, if your uncle has any objections to showing his grounds——"

"Weel, weel, dinna plague me, since it's to be a mortification at ony rate; gi'e me pen and ink, and ye shall ha'e an order, if that's a' ye want," said Mr Ramsay, impatiently.

Pen, ink, and paper, were speedily procured; and uncle Adam, seating himself in a most deliberate manner, produced the order.

Mrs Major glanced her eye upon it, then reddened as she exclaimed—

"Such a way of wording it!—Good gracious! uncle, can you suppose I will go on these terms?

'Admit Major Waddell and his wife!'—Wife! I really never met with any thing like that!"

"What is't you mean?" demanded uncle Adam, in a voice of thunder.—"Are you no Major Waddell's wife?"

"Why, my good sir," began the Major, "you know it is not customary to call ladies of a certain rank *wives* now."

"Certainly not," interposed his lady; "I thought every body had known that!—Wife!—what else could you have said if the Major had been a carter?"

"What *are* you then, if you're no his wife?"

"Why, 'my lady,' you know, my dear sir, would have been the more proper and delicate thing."

"Your leddy!" cried uncle Adam, with a sardonic laugh,—"your leddy!"

"Certainly," said the lady, with much dignity; "there can be no doubt about that; and I can assure you I have too much respect for Major Waddell and myself to submit to any such low vulgar appellation."

"I've met wi' mony a daft thing in my day," said uncle Adam, "but this beats them a'; a married woman that'll no submit to be called a wife! I dinna ken what's to come next. Will you be his dearie then?"

"Really, uncle, I must say, I have borne a great deal from you; but there are some things that nobody can put up with, and there is a duty we owe to ourselves, that—I must say I think neither the Major nor I have been very well used by you;" and the lady's passion grew strong, the Major looked frightened.

"Do compose yourself, my dear; I am sure your good uncle had no intention of doing any thing disrespectful. Why, my dear sir, a very little will set all to rights," offering the pen to uncle Adam; "if you will just take the trouble to write the line over again in

the customary style, 'Major Waddell and lady,' all will be well."

"I'll just as soon cut off my finger," said uncle Adam, ferociously; "and if she winna gang to my hoose as your wife, she shall ne'er set her foot in't in ony other capacity."

"My dear Bell, you hear that," said the poor Major.

"Yes, Major, I do; but I have too much respect for you to give up the point; it would be lowering you indeed, in the eyes of the world, if I were to allow myself to be put on a footing with any common man's wife in the country. It is what I will not put up with!" And with much majesty she seized the order and put it into the fire.

Uncle Adam looked at her for a moment, as if he too would have burst into a blaze. Then, as if disdaining even to revile her, he walked out of the apartment, banging the door after him in a manner enough to have raised the ghost of Lord Chesterfield.

"The old gentleman is very testy this morning," said the Major.

"I am surprised at your patience with him, Major; I have no idea of allowing one's self to be trampled upon in this manner.—Wife! I really can't think enough of it! What else could he have said, speaking of my coachman's wife?"

"It's very true, my dear, the same thing struck me; and in a political point of view, I assure you, I think it the duty of every gentleman who wishes well to the government of the country to support the standing order of things, and to keep up the existing ranks of society."

"That is exactly what I think, Major; it is quite necessary there should be distinctions kept up.—Wife! —every beggar has a wife!"

"Undoubtedly, my dear; beggar-wife, in fact,

means neither more nor less than the wife of a beggarman; and, in these times, when there is such a tendency to a bad spirit amongst the people, and such an evident wish to bring down the higher ranks to a level with themselves, it becomes the duty of every gentleman to guard his privileges with a jealous eye."

"I for one will certainly never give in to these liberty and equality notions, *that* I am determined."

"I hope not, indeed," said the Major, warmed into fervour by the spirit of his lady,—"I hope not, indeed."

"How," said the lady, "can my servants possibly look up to me with proper respect, when I am brought upon a level with themselves?"

"You are perfectly right, my dear, they *cannot* do it, it is impossible."

"Perfectly—wife, indeed!"

——o——

Chapter lxxvj.

Leath we are to diseas or hurt your persone ony wayis, and far leather to want you.—*Bannatyne's Journal.*

THE dialogue was now at its lowest ebb, when Miss Pratt came pattering into the room full speed.

While this disturbance was going on in one room, Mrs St Clair was conversing with Mr Lyndsay in another on the subject of her daughter's pupilage; and Lady Rossville and Colonel Delmour found themselves together in the drawing-room, where they flattered themselves with enjoying an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête*. But within the drawing-room was a small turret, containing piles of music, *porte-feuilles* of drawings and

engravings, heaps of worsteds and sewing-silks, and, in short, a variety of miscellaneous articles, which the Countess had not yet had leisure to look over. This was a favourite haunt of Miss Pratt's, who was fond of picking and grubbing amongst other people's goods; not that she actually stole, but that, as she expressed it, she often met with bits of things that were of no use to any body, and which, when she showed to Lady Rossville, she always made her welcome to. For some time her head had been completely immersed in a large Indian chest, containing many oriental odds and ends, a few of which she had selected for the purpose of being hinted for, and she was just shaking her ears from the cobwebs they might have contracted in their researches, when they were suddenly smote with the sound of her own name pronounced by Colonel Delmour; she heard the Countess's voice in reply, but it was too soft and low to enable her to ascertain her words.

"Since Miss Pratt is disagreeable to you and odious to me, why don't you dismiss her the house, then?" asked Colonel Delmour.—"Much as you despise her, she may do mischief—Ah, Gertrude!"—But here Colonel Delmour's voice sunk into a tenderer strain, and its undistinguished accents only penetrated the massive door which was betwixt them. Miss Pratt had met with many a buffet in her day, but she never had met with any thing like this, and her ears tingled with rage and mortification at hearing herself talked of in such a manner.

"I wish Anthony Whyte heard him!" was her first mental ejaculation; though even to herself, had she considered a moment, the mortifying conviction must have been that if Anthony Whyte did hear it, it would only be to laugh at it. She tried to make out something more, which might prove either a confirma-

Miss Pratt overhears Gertrude.

tion or a refutation of this opprobrious expression; but "love—doubts—adore—agony—suspense—unalterable heart—wholly mine," &c., were all she could pick up; but these were too much—the sword that had just fallen upon her cut two ways, if not three: her respectability (and that was her weak side) was compromised, her footing in a house she had long looked upon as a home was endangered, and her five guineas were in the most imminent peril. In short, she found she was in a very great scrape, and the best thing she could do at present would be to take the first word of flyting and depart.

"Dismiss, indeed! dismiss one's own blood!" and Miss Pratt's danced and bubbled at the bare thought of such a thing. There was a little back stair from the turret, by which she could emerge without going through the drawing-room and confronting her adversaries; and to that she betook herself, and after a little searching found the Major and his lady just beginning to recover their equilibrium. When one's mind is ruffled it is always a satisfaction to meet with others in the same state, especially when the cause is somewhat similar; and though neither party would for the world have betrayed to the other the cause of its discomposure, yet both felt that sort of secret sympathy which made it hail fellow, well met!

Miss Pratt was too experienced in the art of offering visits, securing a seat in a friend's carriage, and such like manœuvres, to be at any loss on the present occasion; and as the Major and lady, in spite of all their finery, were not particularly sought after, they were much flattered at the compliment, and soon settled that she should accompany them, in the first instance, to Thornbank, where she insinuated she would not be allowed to remain long, as both Lady Wellwood and Lady Restall would go mad if they heard she was in their neighbourhood, till they got hold of her.

This important point settled, the next thing to be done was to give all possible bustle and importance to her departure, that she might not appear to have been driven away by any thing that insolent puppy had said;—she had no notion of sneaking away, as if her nose had been bleeding, or showing herself any way flustered, or giving him the slightest satisfaction in any way. She therefore went openly to work—rang all the bells—called to the servants—spoke loudly, but calmly, about her preparations to Lady Betty and Mrs St Clair; and finally repaired to the room where she had left the Countess and her lover, and where she still found them.

"Well, Lady Rossville, I am just come to apologise to you for doing what is really an ill-bred thing; but your good friends, the Major and his lady, have prevailed upon me to take a seat in their carriage; and as there's many visits I ought to have paid long ago, our cousins the Millbanks for one, I'm just going to run away from you. I declare there's the carriage; and, by-the-by, Countess, there's a bit of India silk I have of yours that I got for a pattern, and have always forgot to return—but I shall bring it with me next time I come," with a look of cool defiance at Colonel Delmour.

"You are perfectly welcome to it," said Lady Rossville, in some little embarrassment what to say next—"but this is a very sudden resolution of yours."

"I'm a great enemy to your long preparations,—a long warning is just a lingering parting, as Mr Whyte says, so farewell. God bless you, my dear! and take care of yourself," in a most emphatic and oracular tone—"take care of yourself and,"—in a loud whisper,—"if you would take an old friend's advice, you would dismiss at least *one* of your lovers," with a glance at Colonel Delmour, who from the moment of her entrance had been amusing himself with a musical snuff-box, which he continued to play off with the most unceasing attention,

as if quite unconscious of her presence. Gertrude was leaving the room with Miss Pratt, to do the parting honour to her guests—when looking up he called, "Shall I walk to the stables now, and examine the state of your stud, or shall I wait for you?"

"I am no judge of horses," answered the Countess —"so I shall leave that department entirely to you," —and she passed on to the saloon, before Miss Pratt could find words to express her indignation at finding he had already begun to interfere in the Rossville *menage*. All was now leave-taking—regrets, compliments, promises and invitations, and final adieus—and the trio at length were wheeled off. Much solace they found in each other's society during the drive, for each and all of them had something to animadvert upon as to the state of affairs at Rossville.

Uncle Adam missed Miss Pratt at dinner, and the kind message she had left for him with Mrs St Clair was not delivered. Lyndsay was out of spirits, and Lady Rossville was inattentive; and, in short, uncle Adam began to feel himself one too many. He was also within two pages of the end of Guy Mannering; and therefore, upon retiring to his chamber, he sent off a line to the Blue Boar desiring a chaise might be sent for him the following morning at six o'clock.

Chapter xxxij.

Ah! what will not a woman do who loves!
What means will she refuse to keep that heart
Where all her joys are placed! DRYDEN.

THE seeds of false shame were beginning to be sown in Lady Rossville's heart, and she was secretly pleased when she heard of uncle Adam's intended departure. She felt the contrast

between Colonel Delmour and him was too much; the gulf seemed impassable that was betwixt them, and it was painful to her to feel that she was ashamed of her uncle.

"I wonder why I never felt this with Edward Lyndsay," thought she; "it must be that he is not so refined in his ideas as Delmour," and with that answer the thought passed away from her mind. She, however, pressed her uncle to wait breakfast, and to accept of her carriage to take him home; but he was resolute in taking his own way, which was commonly the most uncomfortable that could be contrived.

"Fare ye weel," said he, with something of softness in his look and manner; "ye want naething frae me, so you'll tak naething."

"No, indeed, my dear uncle," said Gertrude, affectionately shaking his hand, "I do not require any thing; but I shall always remember your kindness to me when I did; I only wish I could make you as happy as—as I am myself," added she, with a smile and a blush.

Mr Ramsay shook his head, and uttered something betwixt a groan and a hem.

"Weel, weel, I wish it may last; but 'rue and thyme grow baith in ae garden;' but I need nae fash to gi'e ye ony o' my advice, for whan folk need naething else, they'll no tak that; so fare ye weel;"—and with something amounting almost to a squeeze of the hand, in its own uncouth way, the uncle and niece parted. Her relief from the presence of her mother's relations was, however, of short duration.

The following days were almost entirely devoted to business; for Lord Millbank and Mr Alexander Black came to Rossville, and long meetings and discussions ensued, at many of which Gertrude was obliged to be present, to her own and Colonel Delmour's

infinite weariness and chagrin. His only solace, during the hours she was shut up from him, was in lounging about the house and grounds, devising plans of useless expense, which he longed impatiently to have put in execution. No views of beneficence or charity made any part of his schemes; his every idea centred in self-indulgence, and luxury and magnificence were all to which he looked as his recompence.

At length the business was brought to a conclusion, and Gertrude was once more at liberty; for Mrs St Clair, after several ineffectual attempts to gain the entire direction of her daughter, and the controul of her every action, found it vain, and she was therefore obliged to carry the reins with a light hand, lest the Countess should have sought to free herself from them altogether.

Lyndsay alone, of all the guests, now remained; and he still lingered, as though loth to give her up entirely to the influence of Colonel Delmour. He was aware that the heart cannot be long and exclusively devoted to one object without contracting somewhat of affinity towards it; and he sighed in bitterness of spirit, when he thought how Gertrude's nature, even now, with all its faults, so pure, so lofty, so generous, so amiable, would be debased and perverted by the baser alloy with which it mingled. What a different creature might she become under other guidance, so easily managed when her affections led the way!—what capacities of happiness for herself and others seemed now at stake! But, alas! how misdirected, how useless, if not pernicious, might they become under such controul!—and Lyndsay, unlike himself, became wavering and irresolute as to the part he ought to act. Every day seemed to increase the alienation between Colonel Delmour and him; but on Lyndsay's part it was so calm and mild, so free from all wrath and bitterness, that it might have escaped notice altogether, but for the sort

of repressed animosity which the other occasionally betrayed.

"Why is it," said Lady Rossville one day to her lover, "that Edward and you are not better friends?—Has any misunderstanding taken place between you, for you are not even upon the same terms you were when I first saw you?—then you walked, rode, shot, conversed together; but now you seem carefully to avoid all intercourse—it is unpleasant to me to witness this."

"'Tis you yourself are the cause of it, Gertrude," answered Colonel Delmour, warmly.—"How can you imagine I can endure the sight of a man who, knowing the terms we are upon, yet presuming upon the encouragement you give him, dares to love you, and is, at this moment, planning to undermine me in your affections?—By Heaven, I think I am but too patient!"

"Lyndsay love me!" exclaimed the Countess; "what a fancy!" But, at the same moment, a confused crowd of half-formed, half-forgotten thoughts, rushed upon her mind, and raised a blush on her cheek, which did not escape Delmour's notice.

"Yes, in his own cold-blooded, methodistical way; not in the way I love you—to madness—to idolatry:—his existence, his soul, are not bound up in you as mine are; but he would supplant me if he could."

"His love must, indeed, be of a different nature from yours," said Lady Rossville, trying to laugh away Colonel Delmour's roused passion, "for he has scarcely ever said a civil thing to me; and as for a compliment, I have sometimes tried whether I could not extort one from him, but never have succeeded. Nay, don't frown so, Delmour—if Lyndsay does not flatter, at least he never frowns."

This remark did not dispel the cloud from her lover's brow; on the contrary, he bit his lip, as if to express

the rising of his anger: after a few moments he said, in a subdued voice—"I have never flattered you, if by flattering you mean insincerity; but I had flattered myself that you had been above practising those paltry arts by which so many women seek to enhance their value. I flattered myself, Gertrude, that you had been superior to coquetry; but when I see you encouraging the attentions of one who presumes to love you, even in the face of him to whom you have given your vows—one, too, whom you must know to be my enemy,—can you wonder that I am sometimes driven to hate him, and almost to doubt whether you really love me?"

"Unjust, unkind!" said Lady Rossville, turning from him in displeasure.

"No, Gertrude, 'tis you who are unjust, unkind; my heart is solely yours; its every thought and wish centre in you; but it *must* have yours—yours wholly and undivided, in return: less will not satisfy love such as mine."

Lady Rossville remained silent, and Colonel Delmour's agitation increased.

"I see how it is," cried he, passionately; "his artful insinuations have prevailed;—but he shall answer for this."

"Ah, Delmour! if you love me as you say you do, why do you thus grieve me?—I would not for worlds willingly afflict you."

"But you do," interrupted he; "you torture me to agony, and when I dare to complain you reproach me."

"Tell me what it is you require of me, since all I have done and suffered for your sake is insufficient."

"All that I require of you, Gertrude, is, that you will not at least ask me to become the bosom friend of one who, I know, seeks to undermine me in your affections—I cannot be the friend of a hypocrite."

"Edward a hypocrite!—Ah, Delmour! how your

passion misleads you!—He is all truth and openness—he is indeed——" Then, after a pause, "When I look back a few months, and think of the state of incertitude I was then in as to your faith and constancy—when at times my own was almost shaken by my doubts—at such a time, had Lyndsay been what you suppose, had he sought to ingratiate himself with me—I do not know—I cannot tell—perhaps he might have gained an influence over me. But, indeed, he never tried, he never spoke to me as a lover; but, on every occasion, he proved himself my friend,—as such I must always consider him. Do not, then, dear Frederick, embitter my peace with any of those idle jealousies: the time is past," added she, with a smile, "for Lyndsay to think of loving me now."

"But he *does* love you, Gertrude—I read it in the agitation he betrayed upon my arrival—he guessed his schemes would then be frustrated—he knew that I detested all underhand plots, and would come boldly forward, and bring matters to an issue. I did so—you have promised to be mine—he knows you have, and yet he would supplant me if he could. And is it right in you, warned as you are of all this, to continue to encourage him, and lavish your attentions on him?"

"What can I do?" asked the Countess, beginning to give way to her lover's vehemence, and to believe that she really was doing wrong—"what would you have me do?"

"Nay, it is not for me, Gertrude, to point out the line of conduct you ought to pursue—I leave that to yourself. I would have concealed from you, if I could, all that you have made me suffer; but when you call upon me to make a friend of the man who, in spite of our mutual vows, dares to love you——"

"But this is mere fancy."

"No—I speak from certainty. Gertrude, is it

possible you can be so blind as not to have perceived it yourself?"

"Would that I were both blind and deaf to all the jarring elements which are for ever threatening my peace," said Lady Rossville, sorrowfully.—"How happy, how perfectly happy might I be, but for the passions and the prejudices of others! but it is distracting to me to see all those I love thus at variance. If this is the necessary consequence of riches and grandeur, oh! how willingly would I exchange them for good-will and mutual confidence!"—and tears dropped from her eyes, as she leaned her head upon her hand.

"Gertrude, dearest, most beloved! forgive me that I have thus distressed you—were you but mine, all these doubts would vanish; but while it is in the power of malice or treachery yet to separate us, can you wonder that it requires all your love to still the tumults of my heart? Call it suspicion—jealousy—what you will; until you are once mine, your partiality for Lyndsay will constitute the torment of my life."

"And I must become unjust, ungrateful, to one to whom I owe so much? Ah, Delmour! at what price must I satisfy you!"

——o——

Chapter xxviij.

Human faults with human grief confess
'Tis thou art changed.

PRIOR.

FROM this time Gertrude's manner was wholly changed towards her cousin. Instead of the sweet smile with which she used to welcome him, her eyes were now commonly averted from

him; and an air of constraint and embarrassment had succeeded the open, confiding carelessness, which had hitherto marked their intercourse.

Lyndsay felt the change, and was at no loss to guess the cause. The books they had been reading together, the songs they used to sing together, were now discarded for others of Colonel Delmour's choice; and she read and sung with him, and with him only. The plans they had been carrying on together were stopped or overturned, and others of a totally different nature were adopted.

"Will you walk with me to-day, Gertrude?" asked Lyndsay, one morning, when he accidentally was left alone with her. "It is long since you have seen your school-house; should you not like to look at it, and see what progress it has made since we last saw it together?"

"Certainly, I should like very much to see it; but the phaeton and horses Colonel Delmour ordered for me have arrived, and I promised to take a drive with him."

"Perhaps you will drive that way, and I shall meet you there?"

"I am afraid it will not be possible." Then, after a pause, she added, "I am afraid you will think me very foolish and expensive, as you tell me I have not much money to squander; but Colonel Delmour and I discovered such a lovely little spot lately on the banks of the river, just a little below the cascade, you know, a sort of tiny Paradise, that the thought struck us both of making a sort of miniature of a *ferme ornée*, quite a baby-house thing, in fact—a sort of Lilliputian beau ideal of rustic life," said she, attempting by a laugh to hide her confusion; "with a flower-garden and all sorts of prettinesses, for you know flowers are my passion; and we appointed to meet some of the people there to-day,

to talk and walk over it; but I am afraid you will think——"

"You did not use to be so afraid of me, Gertrude," said Lyndsay mildly, but gravely; "what have I done to inspire you with so much dread?"

"You know you are my guardian now," said she, with an assumed gaiety; "of course, it is my duty to be a little afraid of you, especially when I know I deserve a scold."

"Well, you will be relieved from your fears—I shall leave you to-day."

"My dear cousin, I spoke but in jest," cried Gertrude, thrown off her guard, and relapsing into her natural manner.

"Not entirely," said Lyndsay, with a melancholy smile; "but, whether you fear me or not, I feel you no longer look upon me as your friend."

"Indeed you wrong me," cried the Countess, in emotion; "I never can cease to regard you as my friend, would you but become the friend of those who are dear to me."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lyndsay, while a flush passed over his face, and he was for a moment silent; he then added, in a calmer tone, "I trust I am no one's enemy—I wish well to all mankind, and so far I may style myself the friend of all; but, with some characters, farther I cannot go."

Lady Rossville coloured deeply, and remained silent; but, from her look and air, she was evidently displeased.

"You distrust me, Gertrude," said Lyndsay, at length breaking silence; "and that is worse than being afraid of me."

"I am, perhaps, too little distrustful of any one," answered she—"it is not my nature to suspect evil—I hope it never will—surely there are other marks by

which we may know those who love us than any that base suspicion can furnish us with."

"Yes, and here is one," said Lyndsay, taking a book from amongst a mass of French novels which lay upon the sofa-table. It was the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, and Lyndsay had begun to read it to her before Colonel Delmour's arrival, since when it had lain neglected. "Here is a picture of true and faithful love; who studies that may soon learn to distinguish the real from the counterfeit;" and he read that simple description of the perfection of human attachment with an emotion which showed how deeply he felt it.

"There is this only to be recorded, that never was there a passion more ardent and less idolatrous—he loved her better than his life, with inexpressible tendernesse and kindnesse—had a most high and obliging esteeme of her—yet still considered honour, religion, and duty above her, nor ever suffered the intrusion of such dotage as should blind him from marking her imperfections: these he looked on with such an indulgent eye as did not abate his love and esteeme of her, while it augmented his care, and blotted out all those spots which might make her appeare lesse worthy of that respect he paid her." *

He laid down the book, but Lady Rossville made no comment—she continued to busy herself arranging some fine forced flowers, which had just been brought her, in a vase, and seemed to give her whole attention to them. This continued for some minutes, and Lyndsay made no attempt to interrupt her; but, on hearing the sound of a carriage, she raised her head, and saw the phaeton driven by Colonel Delmour, and drawn by four beautiful horses, followed by two grooms mounted on two of the same set. A throb of pride and pleasure was felt at her heart, as she looked at the elegant bauble which

* Life of Colonel Hutchinson.

had stopped opposite the saloon; and as she threw open the sash with childish delight, Delmour called to her, to know if she was ready. She answered in the affirmative, and was leaving the room to put on her things, when Lyndsay said—

"Is it thus, then, we are to part, Gertrude, after all the pleasant friendly days we have passed together?"

Lady Rossville stopped, and turned towards him. —"You are not serious in thinking of leaving us to-day?"

"I am, indeed, perfectly so."

"At least, stay till to-morrow—this is such a strange hurried way of leaving us—pray, give us one day more?"

"I would give you many days if they could be of service to you, but that cannot be; forgive me, my dear cousin, if I have pained you—farewell—God bless you!"

Gertrude's heart swelled, and the tear started to her eye as she returned the affectionate pressure of her cousin's hand, but she repressed her emotion.

"You will come again soon," said she; but Lyndsay made no reply, and they parted.

"I fear I have not done as I ought," thought Gertrude with a sigh; but in another moment the thought was gone, and she was seated by her lover. The equipage was perfect, the day was beautiful, all was gaiety and brightness—Colonel Delmour was more than usually delightful, and Lyndsay was forgotten!

—o—

Chapter lxxix.

Serment d'aimer toujours, ou de n'aimer jamais, me paroit un peu téméraire.—VOLTAIRE.

SEVERAL days passed in the same manner, and every day some new scheme of useless profusion was suggested by Colonel Delmour, and adopted by the Countess. New stables must be built to accommodate the additional number of horses he declared to be absolutely necessary; the present billiard-room was inconvenient, a new one would cost a mere trifle; there was no good music-room, and there was no living in the country without a private theatre; the present library might be turned into a conservatory; and the smooth green bank, which sloped gradually down to the river, must be changed into an Italian garden, with hanging terraces and marble fountains; and he sketched a design of the whole so beautiful that the Countess was in ecstasies.

Mrs St Clair witnessed all this with very different feelings; but she saw the ascendency Colonel Delmour had gained over her daughter was absolute, and she feared to come to extremities with either of them, lest it should prove the means of throwing her more completely into his power, and he might prevail upon her to unite herself to him, notwithstanding her promise to the contrary. She had remonstrated with both on the impropriety of Colonel Delmour continuing to reside at Rossville in the present situation of the family; but her words produced no effect, till, at length, finding she could not dislodge him, she formed the resolution of taking Lady Rossville to London, as the best means of detaching her, in some degree, from him. She thought of Lyndsay's words too, "Let her see others no less gifted than he is,"—and she thought it was not

impossible that a change might be wrought in Gertrude's sentiments; at least, there was more likelihood of its being affected amidst the novelty and variety of the metropolis, than in the romantic seclusion of Rossville.

This resolution caused infinite chagrin to the lovers. To Gertrude's young enthusiastic heart, all happiness seemed centred in the spot which contained herself and the idol of her affections; and although the mere inanimate objects of nature,—woods, rocks, water,—are in themselves nothing, yet, combined with the associations of fancy and memory, they acquire a powerful hold upon our hearts. Every step to her was fraught with fond ideas; for it was at Rossville her feelings had been most powerfully excited, whether to joy or sadness; and Rossville, its trees, its banks, its flowers, seemed all entwined with her very existence. It is thus, when the heart is exclusively occupied with one object, it clings with fond tenacity to every circumstance connected with it.

"Ah, mamma!" said she, with a sigh, "how sad to think of leaving Rossville, when it is just beginning to burst forth in all its beauty; and to immure ourselves amidst the stone, and lime, and smoke, and dust of London! Do only look at these almond trees and poplars."

But Mrs St Clair put it on the footing of her health, which required change of air and scene, and a consultation of the London faculty; and her daughter could say no more.

Colonel Delmour shared in her regrets; but his arose from a different cause: his heart was too worldly and sophisticated to participate in those pure and simple pleasures which imparted such delight to hers. But he was aware of the admiration Gertrude would excite when she made her appearance in London; and he was unwilling that she should be seen there until she

should be introduced as his wife. He thought too well of himself and her to dread any rival in her affections; but still the gay world was very unfavourable to the growth of sentiment; there was a multiplicity of objects—a diversity of amusements—a glare, a glitter, and bustle, that could not fail to distract her attention, and weaken the strength of that exclusive attachment she now cherished for him; and, selfish and engrossing as he was, he felt the charm would be diminished, were the devotion lessened.

But, in his murmurs and repinings, Gertrude heard only the same tender regrets which filled her own heart even to overflowing, and she loved him the more for this sympathy in her feelings. The day before that on which they were to set off was the Countess's birthday, but she would not have it observed.

"This day twelvemonths it shall be celebrated gaily, nobly, if you will," said she.

"And must this one pass away, like other vulgar hours," said Delmour, "without a single memorial to distinguish it from common days? Poor that I am! I have not even the most trifling memento worthy to lay at your feet."

"I will not tax you so unmercifully as did the ladies of old their lovers," said Gertrude with a smile. "I want neither a dragon's scale nor a hydra's head, nor even a glass of singing-water, nor a branch of a talking-tree; but you shall bring me, from the greenhouse, a rose *unique*, and that shall be my only gaud to-day."

Colonel Delmour brought the rose. Lady Rossville drew from her finger a rare and costly gem, which had belonged to the late Earl.

"Such tokens are but mere vulgar and oft-repeated emblems of an old story," said she, "from Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex down to the milk-

maid and her 'rush ring;' but it will mark the day, will it not? And if you should turn rebel, or I tyrant —you must choose some more faithful messenger than poor Essex did; and that's all the moral of my tale."

"Woe to the hand that shall ever seek to wear this while I live!" exclaimed Delmour, as he pressed it to his lip, and then placed it on his finger.

Lady Rossville's sole ornament when she appeared at dinner was the rose *unique;* but the heat of the room caused it to expand too quickly, and the leaves dropped suddenly away.

"Happily my nurse could never succeed in making me superstitious," said she, in a low voice, to Colonel Delmour; "else I should have looked on this as some fatal omen."

"The prodigy is," answered he, with a smile, "that either the rose *unique* has suddenly expired of envy at finding itself so eclipsed by the wearer, or—that your gardener forces his flowers too much."

"I fear the latter is the true cause," answered the Countess, laughing; "and it is my own fault, for I never have patience to wait the gradual growth of any thing. I am for every thing starting into full-blown perfection at once."

"Yes, yes, you say true," said Mrs St Clair, significantly, as she caught her daughter's last words, —"art seems to carry the day with you in all things, Gertrude; 'tis well you are beginning to discover your own foible."

Colonel Delmour bit his lip; and Lady Rossville blushed with wounded feeling, as she bent her head to pick up some of the scattered rose leaves.

———o———

Chapter xxx.

Une personne à la mode n'a de prix et de beauté que ce qu'elle emprunte d'un caprice léger, qui nait et qui tombe presque dans le même instant: aujourd'hui elle est courue, les femmes s'en parent; demain elle est négligée, et rendue au peuple.—La Bruyere.

LADY ROSSVILLE'S departure from the home of her fathers called forth the regrets and the lamentations of the poor; for although her attentions towards them had somewhat relaxed since Colonel Delmour's arrival, yet she had done enough under Lyndsay's auspices to render herself completely beloved by them. The various works, too, which she had begun, all in the spirit of profuseness and self-gratification, contributed for the present to her popularity; and she flattered herself that she was equally actuated by beneficence and humanity, although they had taken a different direction under her lover from what they had done under her cousin's guidance. She sent splendid rather than suitable gifts to her aunts and her cousin Anne, and directed that the former should be constantly supplied with the choicest of fruits and flowers from Rossville. She felt unwilling to depart without sending some remembrance to Lyndsay —some little token of her gratitude for all she owed him of generous interference—of time, and trouble, and kindness hitherto but ill requited; yet she feared to mention the subject before Colonel Delmour, aware of the jealous irritability it might excite. At length the thought struck her, to send him a picture of his mother, which was the most admired and conspicuous of any of the family portraits. It was a Sir Joshua, and done at a time when the subject was in all the graces of early beauty, and the artist in all the fulness of his perfection.

The picture was, therefore, not merely precious as a portrait; but was valuable in itself, as most of that great master's works are, on account of its own intrinsic beauty. "There is something of Lyndsay in the half-melancholy, half-smiling expression of those dark eyes," thought Gertrude, as she looked on the picture; "something, too, of his reproachful look," added she, with a sigh, as her heart told her he had cause to reproach her.

She wrote a few lines to accompany the picture, which was to be packed and sent after she was gone; and then, all being arranged, she bade adieu to Rossville, and the tears stood in her eyes as she looked on its budding woods and sparkling waters, in the soft rays of vernal sunshine.

Mrs St Clair had peremptorily refused permission to Colonel Delmour to accompany them to London, and Gertrude had at once conceded that point to her mother. However much chagrined, he was therefore obliged to acquiesce; and as his rate of travelling was rather more rapid than theirs, he preceded them by several days, and (apprised by a note from the Countess of their approach to the metropolis) was at the hotel ready to receive them on their arrival.

The following day he brought his mother and sisters to introduce them to Gertrude. She had anticipated the meeting with that trepidation natural to one so situated; but her timidity was soon dispelled by the pleasant easy manners of Lady Augusta, and the lively good-humoured frankness of her daughters. There was much to attract, and nothing to be afraid of; and before they had been half an hour together, Gertrude felt as though she were already one of themselves. They were pressed to dine with Lady Augusta in Brook Street; but Mrs St Clair declared herself too much fatigued with the journey for such an exertion, and Gertrude resisted their entreaties

out of compliment to her mother. They were, however, to meet the following day, when something was to be fixed; and after much talking, and a great display of affection on both sides between the cousins, they parted. Even Mrs St Clair was more pleased with them than she cared to admit to herself, for they had paid her more attention than she was accustomed to receive; and had they not been Colonel Delmour's mother and sisters, she would have been loud in her praises of them. Gertrude spoke of them to her lover with all the warmth she felt, but he appeared but little gratified by her commendations. "You do not seem sufficiently sensible how charming they are," said she; "you did not say half enough in their praise."

"I told you you would find Lady Augusta a very good-looking, well-bred person, did I not?" said he, with a smile; "and the girls very gay, and good-humoured, and very like other girls."

"O more than that! Lady Augusta is very delightful, and your sisters—how much more agreeable they are, for instance, than the Miss Millbanks."

"Are they? yes, by-the-by, the Miss Millbanks are very Scotch, indeed; but most misses, Scotch or English, are pretty much alike."

A house had been procured in Park Lane; Mrs St Clair thought it too magnificent and too expensive; but Colonel Delmour approved of it, Lady Rossville admired it, and the house was taken. Then came equipages, horses, liveries; in short, an establishment in which taste and splendour only were consulted without any regard to the means, which indeed Gertrude herself believed to be inexhaustible, and which Delmour, with the reckless profusion of selfish extravagance, thought not about at all. Since Lady Rossville was to appear in the world, his only anxiety was that she should, at

the first, take her place at the very head of the fashionable world; aware that if she once entered in an inferior *grade*, she might not afterwards, even as his wife, be able to attain the proud pre-eminence of ton, which, of all pre-eminences, is the one most esteemed in the great world.

"Lady Augusta has kindly offered to introduce me to her milliner and jeweller, and all sorts of useful people," said Gertrude to him one day;—"and in the evening she proposes that mamma and I should accompany her to the opera."

Colonel Delmour received this information rather dryly, and seemed to hesitate in his reply. At last he said—"I have a great respect for Lady Augusta's good sense and good intentions; but really her tradespeople are so perfectly antediluvian, that you will oblige me by having nothing to do with them."

Gertrude was disposed to take this as a joke, but that she saw he was serious. "Lady Augusta does not dress in good taste," continued he; "and as for the girls, they can scarcely be said to have a taste at all—they stick themselves over with feathers, or flowers, or butterflies, or anything that comes in their way.—Emily rather carries it off well; but poor Georgy looks as if her ornaments had been actually blown upon her."

"But how can I refuse so polite an offer?—and, besides, I don't know who are the people to employ."

"Leave all that to me, or rather to a friend of mine, Lady Charles Arabin, who comes to town to-morrow, and whom I shall bring to visit you immediately."—Seeing Gertrude look surprised, he added—"She is not handsome, and is rather *passée*; but she has the best air and taste of anybody in town—in fact, she gives the tone at present to every thing; and, therefore, I would rather that you took her as your guide, than Lady Augusta, that is, in all matters of mere taste and fashion."

"But I have a taste of my own in dress," said Lady Rossville, half-displeased at the idea of being obliged to submit to the decision of another.

"And a perfect one," said Colonel Delmour; "but taste alone won't do without fashion. Venus herself, even attired by the Graces, would be thought *maussade*, were she to be introduced by a duchess who had been excluded from Almack's, or who had never supped at D—— House."

"Then, who can value the blind admiration of the multitude?" said Gertrude;—"not I indeed;—'tis much too paltry a triumph for me to take any trouble to acquire. I care not a straw for such empty distinctions, and would rather have the approbation of *your* mother than of the whole fashionable world."

"What a word for you!" said Delmour, laughing. —"Approbation is a very good thing in itself, and a very useful school-word; but for you, Gertrude, with your charms and your graces, to be approved of! No; you must be followed, admired, adored, worshipped."

"I am afraid 'tis in your imagination alone I stand any chance for being deified," said Gertrude, smiling—"so I shall certainly not start a candidate for immortal honours. I am not ambitious, Delmour, and shall be satisfied with your homage and true affections, since you will not allow me the approbation of your family."

"But I am proud, and vain, and ambitious of and for you, dearest Gertrude," said Delmour gaily, "and must not suffer your partiality for me and my family to detract from the brilliancy of your star."

"But I would rather be introduced by them than by any one else;—if Lady Augusta does not mix much in society, there is your aunt, the Duchess of Burlington."

"Worse and worse," cried Delmour—"I would rather you never appeared at all than have you brought out by her."

"Why so?" asked Gertrude, in some surprise.—"Is she not respectable?"

Colonel Delmour could scarcely preserve his gravity at this question, as he replied—"Respectability, like approbation, is a thing of no account here—it gives no consequence whatever to its possessor."

"Then, what precious gifts of nature, or acquirements of art, are they which *do* give consequence in this magic circle of yours?" said the Countess.

"That nameless *je ne sais quoi* which all admire, but none can define, and which unfortunately my highly respectable relations want. The Duchess is an excellent person in her way; but she is antiquated in her notions, dresses shockingly, gives parties where I should blush to be detected, and I should be undone were I to be seen offering her my arm in public."

This was said in a sportive manner, which made Gertrude look upon it as a jest.

"Then I may scarcely expect to be acknowledged by you to-night," said she, in the same tone. "Perhaps it would be your ruin also were you to be seen in Lady Augusta's box talking to, or, it may be, handing out a Scotch cousin."

Colonel Delmour looked grave.

"You will really oblige me," said he, "if you will decline going into public for a day or two; although I have been talking mere nonsense on the subject, yet, I do assure you, a first introduction is of more consequence than you at present are aware of."

"Consequence!" repeated Gertrude contemptuously; "if I am not entitled to be of consequence on my own account, I certainly do not wish to derive it from Lady Charles Arabin."

"You mistake the matter entirely, dearest Gertrude; I am desirous you should appear with that effect which you are so well entitled to produce, but which you will

derive much more from your beauty and your grace than from your rank. I cannot exactly make one so unsophisticated as you comprehend the arbitrary and capricious mechanism of the fashionable world."

"No, pray do not attempt it. I am sure I shall never be fashionable. Ah, Delmour! it was not thus we talked and felt at dear Rossville! What was the world to us there?"

"Would to Heaven we were there now!" said Delmour, echoing her sigh; "but you mistake me, Gertrude; it is not that I place the world in competition with you, but that I abhor the thoughts of your preference for me lowering you in the slightest degree. You have everything that entitles you to take the first place in the best society; but, absurd as it seems, I must candidly confess to you that my family, although high in rank and fair in character, cannot do you justice in that respect. I keep clear of all that sort of thing; but if once you get into their circle, you will be shackled eternally with bad parties and acquaintances that will keep all the best people aloof: for instance, Lady Augusta *would* introduce the girls into the Burlington set; the consequence is, they are eternally followed by men with whom I don't associate; in short, secondary men, whom they are forced to smile on *faute de mieux;* but that must not be with you, Gertrude—you have already given up too much for me; do not, as you love me, add yet more to the self-reproach I sometimes feel for having suffered you to sacrifice so much."

"The feeling is a generous, a noble one; but I cannot help thinking it a mistaken one," said the Countess; "but since you are so scrupulous, I shall yield the point: make me, then, what you will, only pray don't make me a fine lady."

Colonel Delmour was all rapture and gratitude, and

only left her to go and inform his mother that Lady Rossville had caught cold, and was unable to fulfil her engagements; his sisters visited her in the course of the day, and Gertrude blushed with shame as she attempted to confirm the falsehood.

"I half suspect," said Georgiana, laughing, "that Master Fred has been telling you that mamma is not fashionable; he is so admired and *recherché* himself, that we think he gives himself airs: so, pray don't encourage him, or you will spoil him entirely."

"It is so provoking," said Miss Emily, "that he won't allow you to go with us; for I can see it is he that prevents you from going with us to Kitchener's this morning—he has some such exquisite things just now!—things really to die for!" with a deep sigh.

"Since that is the case," said Gertrude, smilingly, "I am fortunate in having escaped the danger; but, if you are not afraid to encounter it, you shall each of you choose something for me according to your own taste, and then I shall see how far we agree."

"How happy you must be who can afford to choose what you like!" said both sisters, sorrowfully.

"For to-day I devolve my happiness upon you," said Lady Rossville; "only remember to choose exactly what you should like for yourselves."

The sisters departed, delighted with the commission, and not without some latent suspicion as to the result of their choice, which was verified by each receiving the very handsome and expensive articles of jewellery they had selected.

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Chapter lxxxj.

The stage is pleasant, and the way seems short,
All strew'd with flowers;
The days appear but hours,
Being spent in time-beguiling sport.
Here griefs do neither press, nor doubts perplex;
Here's neither fear to curb, nor care to vex.

QUARLES.

PERHAPS no woman ever heard another highly commended by her lover without feeling at least a slight sensation of pique and jealousy, and something of this sort Gertrude had begun to cherish against Lady Charles Arabin before she saw her. She was, therefore, prepared to receive her with something of the air and manner with which a pretty spoiled child might be supposed to welcome its governess; and, unknown to herself, there was a *tournure* of the head, a colour on the cheek, a slight pout on the lip, when that Lady and Colonel Delmour were announced together. But the first glance at Lady Charles instantly dispelled all her fears and thick-coming fancies; as she beheld (what in common life would be called) a middle-aged woman, without any pretensions to beauty, beyond a tolerably regular set of features, and a figure which, though evidently of a fine structure, was thin almost to meagreness. Her dress was striking without being singular—her manners were quiet, but perfectly elegant; and the *tout ensemble* conveyed that impression of high birth and high breeding, which is something too subtle and refined to be described or analysed; something of so delicate and impalpable a nature that it might sometimes escape notice altogether, but for the effect it produces upon others. Gertrude had never felt that her mother was vulgar, till she contrasted the florid pomposity of her manner with the ease, grace, and

simplicity of Lady Charles Arabin: she spoke little, and there was nothing in her conversation beyond the frivolous chit-chat of the day; but her voice and accent were both fine, and she skimmed over subjects with an airy lightness that would have baffled any thing like discussion, even had any one been so inclined. She invited Gertrude to take a drive with her, to which she readily acceded, notwithstanding Mrs St Clair's manifest displeasure, which, however, she did not venture to express.

That lady was considerably annoyed by the manners of Lady Charles, which made her feel her own as something unwieldy and overgrown—like a long train, they were both out of the way and in the way, and she did not know very well how to dispose of them. Indeed, few things can be more irritating than for those who have hitherto piqued themselves upon the abundance of their manner, to find all at once that they have a great deal too much; that no one is inclined to take it off their hands; and that, in short, it is dead stock.

Lady Charles took leave, but Gertrude stopped a moment in the drawing-room behind her companions to say a few coaxing words to her mother; then, as she hurried to overtake them, she heard Lady Charles say, as in answer to some remark of Colonel Delmour, "She is perfect!" and she blushed as she caught the meaning glance he turned to cast upon her. Much was done in the way of shopping; a variety of splendid dresses were ordered; a great deal of *bijouterie* was purchased; and Gertrude was whirled from place to place, and from shop to shop, till her head was almost turned with the varied and bustling scenes in which she was acting, for the first time, a part.

It is not at first that London either astonishes or delights. It is too vast and too complicated to be

taken in all at once, either by the eye or the mind; and it requires a little schooling to enjoy even the variety and the brilliancy of its pleasures, as they flash in rapid and never-ceasing succession on the bewildered senses. Lady Rossville, like all novices, felt something of this; and she sighed for the peaceful romantic seclusion of her own domain, where she was all in all, and where her lover was all to her. But it is not the young and admired who can stand long on the brink of pleasure, indulging their own sentimental reveries; and Gertrude, with all her feeling, and romance, and enthusiasm, was soon in the vortex of elegant dissipation.

Borne like a feather on the tide of fashionable celebrity, she was hurried along she knew not whither; while, at the same time, wherever she went she was hailed as the leader of every favourite folly. She was the idol of the day, and she breathed only in an atmosphere of adulation, baleful alike in its effects on the head and the heart. Amidst the delusions of the senses, she forgot everything save her lover; but even when all looks were turned upon her, as the magnet of the glittering throng, it was in his eyes only that she sought to read her triumph. Although her engagement with Colonel Delmour was pretty generally understood, and he had all the bearing of the accepted lover, still that did not prevent others from entering the lists, but, on the contrary, was rather an additional attraction; and men far superior to himself in rank and station, and some of them not much his inferiors in personal endowments, had declared themselves her lovers. But even Delmour, jealous and irritable as he was, felt that he had no cause to dread a rival in her affections. Mr Delmour and she had only met once, and that at a formal dinner at the Duke of Burlington's, where they had merely exchanged the common

courtesies of acquaintanceship. He was evidently of the family school; the Duke and Duchess being formal, dull personages, living in a vast and stately mansion, amidst a profusion of magnificent heirlooms of every description.

"That *would* have been an establishment for you, Gertrude," sighed her mother, as they left the mansion, where she had felt more at home than amidst the gay unattainable ease of fashionable manners; "what madness to reject so magnificent a lot! but even yet——"

"O, mamma! beware how you utter even a hope on that subject, unless you would raise the shades of the whole race of the mighty departed Delmours. I have been thinking how fortunate it is that I am destined to be a mere scion on that noble stock;—how could I ever have sustained the whole weight of the family dignity! I protest I have got a crick in my neck with only looking at and imagining the weight of the Duchess's old-fashioned diamond necklace;" and Gertrude said to herself that Colonel Delmour was quite right in wishing to preserve her from his family circle.

She now gave herself up with greater zest than ever to the round of frivolous occupations and amusements which form the sole business of so many an immortal being's existence, and which are no less fascinating to the unreflecting mind than they are vain and unsatisfying to the eye of reason and experience. It was to no purpose that Mrs St Clair remonstrated, and threatened, and denounced — her power was gone;—she never had possessed the affection of the daughter, and she had now lost the controul of authority. Besides, the Countess afforded her little time or opportunity to expatiate on her extravagances;—she lived in such an unceasing whirl, that Mrs St Clair had

in vain strove to keep pace with her. She had been obliged to relinquish the attempt—their hours did not keep time, and their engagements were in opposite spheres—each had their apartments—their carriage—their society; and Gertrude felt satisfied that her mother had all these things, and was also noticed by, and indeed in habits of intimacy with, Colonel Delmour's family. Her own mornings were spent in sitting to half the sculptors and painters in town for busts and pictures, in all possible variety, to please the fastidious taste of her lover;—in riding in the Park with him, or in shopping with Lady Charles, or some other frivolous idler;—in the evening there were dinners, and parties, and balls, and operas, and assemblies, in such quick succession, as left her scarcely conscious of having been at one before she found herself at some other.

"Confess this is to live," said Delmour to her one evening, as he led her from one gay multitude where she had been the admired of all admirers, to another where her appearance would excite an equal sensation.

"All that is wanting," replied she, with a smile, "is time to feel one's enjoyment; but I can scarcely tell whether I chase pleasure or it chases me, or whether we are running a race, or—in short, how we go on together."

"Take a ride with me to-morrow in the Park, and we shall go at a sober foot-pace, that you may have time to find out," said Delmour.

"But to-morrow I give Lawrence another sitting——"

"Take the ride first, and you will go to him with a bloom that will make him burn his palette."

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Chapter lxxxij.

All these inconveniences are incident to love: reproaches, jealousies, quarrels, reconcilements, war—and then peace.—TERENCE.

THE Countess smiled a consent, and Colonel Delmour was at her breakfast-table the following morning. A salver stood upon it covered with cards, notes, letters, bills, petitions, and memoranda of every description. She carelessly tossed over some, opened and glanced over others, while she listened at the same time to her lover as he read the record of her triumphs in the Morning Post. At length, as she discovered some post letters amid the heap, she drew back her hand, and, with a shudder, exclaimed—

"Ah! these ugly letters!"

"What letters?" inquired Delmour, as he at the same time drew the stand towards him.—"O! some Scotch parish business, is that all?"

"Lectures from my guardians, and tiresome explanations from my steward, are the best I have to expect. I had a letter from him t'other day, telling me the school-house was stopped for want of money."

"How very distressing!" said Colonel Delmour, with an ironical smile;—"then you will have no long, lean, grey, weeping-looking building, with its steep, straight roof, and its little green glass windows, and its shoals of hoddy-doddy, white-haired, blubbered boys and girls.—I hope it was to have formed a vista in the park; it would have been what is called, I believe, a most gratifying sight."

"You are very kind to try to reconcile me to myself by treating it so slightly; but I feel I have been to blame: I have been too expensive."

"In what respect?"

"In everything—this service, for instance," pointing to the magnificent breakfast service of richly chased antique plate and Sêvres china—"I am shocked to think how much it cost."

"Why delft, to be sure, would have been cheaper—and, to the philosophic eye, a pewter basin is as becoming, perhaps, as a silver one—'tis a pity you did not consult me instead of Lady Charles about it!"

"Lady Charles is certainly very extravagant," said the Countess, gravely.

"Not more so than others in her rank. Lord Charles has a good fortune, and allows her to spend it, which she does in supporting her station in society.—Methodists and misers, I believe, are for abolishing all these distinctions, and building conventicles, and endowing hospitals with their money."

"One of these letters, I perceive, is from Lyndsay," said Gertrude, with another sigh.

"Which you seem afraid even to look upon.—Shall I open it for you?"

"Do; but first give Zoe a few of these strawberries."

Colonel Delmour read the letter aloud—it was short and hurried, and the purport of it was communicating the sudden death of the parish minister of Rossville, by which means the Countess would have it in her power to provide for young Leslie, who had just been with him bespeaking his good offices.

"Who is this Leslie who finds such a patron in Lyndsay?" inquired Colonel Delmour.

"He is a very interesting young man, who is engaged to my cousin, Anne Black, and the want of a church has hitherto been the only obstacle to their marriage.—How happy it makes me to have it in my power to remove it!—Pray, reach me my writing stand, and I shall settle that *sur le champ*."

But, instead of obeying, Delmour took the hand she had so impatiently extended, and said—

"Is it possible, my dear Gertrude, you can be serious in this? Can you really think, for a moment, of having your relations placed so near you in so inferior a situation? Only consider, the manse is almost close by the gate—that is of little consequence with people who have no claim upon you; but really the Countess of Rosville, and her cousin the minister's wife, must be brought in contact,—there is confusion in the thought!"

Lady Rosville looked displeased; then said—"My cousin is a person I never can feel ashamed of."

"Not as she is; but as she will be, when she degenerates into the minister's wife, with her printed gown and black mittens, with a troop of half-licked cubs of children at her heels, and the minister himself, sooty man! at their head, with his lank locks, and his customary suit of rusty black, all coming to visit, perchance to dine with, their cousin the Countess."

"If you are ashamed of my relations, you ought to have said so sooner," said Gertrude, struggling with her emotion; "as it is, it is not yet too late——"

"Dearest Gertrude, how seriously you take my *badinage!* But you must be sensible that where the difference of rank and station is so great between near relations, the local affinity had as well not be quite so close; your own good sense and delicate perception must point out to you the inevitable *disagrémens* that must ensue—the slights that will be felt, the offences that will be taken, the affronts that will be imagined."

"My cousin is not a person of that sort," said Gertrude; "and, I am sure, her near vicinity would be a source of great pleasure to me. I like her society, and should have her often with me."

"You may at present; but, be assured, that could

not possibly continue; you must move in such different spheres, and must associate with such different people, that 'tis impossible you could act or think alike. For instance, you told me that the Duchess of Arlington, the Arabins, Lady Peverley, Mrs Beechey, and I know not all, had promised to pay you a visit at Rossville this summer, and to take parts in your theatricals, if you can have the theatre ready: how do you suppose the minister and his wife could relish, or be relished by, those of your friends?"

"But I am in a manner pledged to my cousin——"

"Not for this church, surely?"

"No, not for this one in particular; but I repeatedly assured her that whenever I had it in my power I would befriend her, and now it is so——"

"Dearest Gertrude, it is *not* in your power, that is, if I possess that influence with you I have hitherto flattered myself I did; on that faith, in the transaction I had lately with Harry Monteith relating to my exchange into the Guards, I ventured to promise that the first church that was in your gift, as the phrase is, you would —that is I would—engage your interest in behalf of his old tutor—quite a charity case, as he represented it; a married man with a large family, and I forget all the particulars; but, at the time, it struck me as a thing that would interest you."

Lady Rossville's colour rose during this speech, and for some moments she remained silent, as if struggling with her feelings: at last she said—"You have taken a strange liberty, it seems, and one which I cannot easily pardon."

At that moment a servant entered to say her ladyship's horses were at the door.

"Desire them to be put up; I shall not ride to-day," said she; and taking up Lyndsay's letter she quitted the room, leaving Delmour too much piqued, as well

as surprised at this display of spirit, to make any attempt to detain her. He, however, lounged a considerable time at the breakfast-table, expecting her return ; tossed over all the litter of new publications, and music, and expensive toys that lay scattered about ; touched her harp, to ascertain whether it were in tune, and broke two of the strings ; stirred the fire, although the room was suffocating ; then threw open a window, exclaiming at the smell of a tuberose ; but still Gertrude did not return—carriage after carriage was sent from the door, and even Lady Charles was not admitted. At length his patience was exhausted : he wrote—"Dearest Gertrude, see me but for one moment, as you love me ;" and, ringing the bell, he desired it might be conveyed to Lady Rossville. A verbal answer was returned—her ladyship was sorry she was particularly engaged ; and Delmour, too proud to sue any further, left the house in a transport of indignation.

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Chapter xxxiij.

Is Nature's course dissolved ? Doth Time's glass stand ?
Or hath some frolic heart set back the hand
Of Fate's perpetual clock ? Will't never strike ?
Is crazy Time grown lazy, faint, or sick,
With very age?

QUARLES.

GERTRUDE, too, was proud in her way, and her feelings had been severely wounded. She had already become sufficiently *fine* to be able to feel, in some degree, the truth of what Delmour had said in regard to her relations ; but she was piqued that *he* should have been the person to force so disagreeable a conviction upon her—*he* who had so often declared

that she was all the universe to him — and whose favourite maxim it was, that love could see no defects in aught pertaining to the object beloved! How often had he repeated to her, when she smilingly chid his flatteries — "*O que les illusions de l'amour sont amiables! Les flatteries sont en un sens des verités— le jugement se tait, mais le cœur parle!*" Why was it, then, that he was become so clear-sighted as thus to anticipate these paltry feelings of wounded vanity?— and to have presumed so far already as to have usurped her power—to have promised away in her name, without leave asked or obtained, a gift of so much importance—one which she might have had a pleasure in conferring at his solicitation, but which it would be weakness to allow to be thus wrested from her! "Lyndsay would not have acted thus!" thought she, as she looked at his letter, and a tear dropt upon it. She leant her head upon her hand, and, for the first time since her arrival in London, fell into a train of reflection, from which she only roused herself to begin an answer to his letter. But she had only got as far as —*My Dear Cousin,—I am happy to have it in my power*——" when Colonel Delmour's billet was brought to her. She read it, and wavered.—"No, I will not see him," thought she, proudly, at this triumph over her already returning tenderness.—"But I will not finish my letter to Lyndsay till to-morrow—one day can make no difference, and 'tis almost time to go to Lawrence's." She rang, and ordered the carriage—then drove to Lady Augusta's to get one of the girls to accompany her. As they drove along, Delmour passed on horseback, and merely bowed with an air of lofty respect.

"Fred seems to be on his high horse to-day," said Miss Georgiana, laughing; "I told you he would give himself airs; but"—looking after him—"he certainly

is the handsomest man in town, and unquestionably the most admired and imitated. Apropos, have you seen the Duchess of St Ives?—I hear she has already doffed her weeds, and come out in all her glory. Delmour was an admirer of hers, you must know, in her married state—at least so the ill-natured world said. I know that she is desperately in love with him, and I believe would marry him to-morrow if he would ask her; so she will be ready to poison you, or pierce you to the heart perhaps with a bodkin, as the ladies in old ballads used to do their rivals."

There certainly was nothing in this that ought to have gratified a mind in a right state of feeling—it was food for a perverted taste only; but how often are the passions and the prejudices gratified at the expense of the principles! Gertrude's vanity was pleased to hear her lover praised, and her pride was piqued to show her triumph over the Duchess of St Ives.

These two ladies had met, exchanged cards, and graced each other's parties; but a mutual and instinctive sort of antipathy had, from the first, existed between them. They were both young, beautiful, distinguished, and independent: rivals in celebrity and extravagance, Gertrude learnt, for the first time, that they were also rivals in love, and a momentary pang shot across her breast at the discovery. But hers was not a nature to harbour jealous fears, and she soon dismissed them.

"No," thought she, "whatever Delmour's faults may be, I should wrong him were I to doubt his love and truth;" and she recollected some slighting and satirical remarks he had made upon the Duchess the evening before. She, therefore, listened with complacency, while Miss Delmour rattled away about the Duchess—her beauty—her pride—her parties—her diamonds—her jointure—her independence of all con-

troul—and, to sum up the whole, she concluded, with a sigh—

"Do you know I never see the Duchess of St Ives that I do not wish I had been born a widow."

When Gertrude returned home it was in the secret hope of hearing that Colonel Delmour had called during her absence.

"Has any body called since I went out?" inquired she of her porter, as she entered the hall.

"O, surely, my lady!" replied he, in some surprise at such a question, as he pointed to a pile of cards.

"No one else?" as she tossed them over with an air of chagrin.

"No, my lady!" in the same tone of amazement at being, for the first time, so strictly interrogated on the duties of his office.

"He may have called, although that stupid man has forgot to mention it," thought she; "and he will probably call again—it is not very late. Those French clocks and watches are always wrong"—as they told a different tale—"it cannot be more than seven."

But just then Mrs St Clair entered, and the mother and the daughter exchanged their morning salutations. The former was going to the theatre, as it was one of her greatest enjoyments to patronise a large party of secondary people, by whom she was looked up to with that respect which money and consequence will always procure from one set, if not from another. She expressed her astonishment at finding her daughter seated at her harp in her morning dress; and the Countess, hastily rising, said she was just going to commence her toilette.—"But I dine with Lady Peverley, who is always late."

"And then what else?" asked Mrs St Clair.

"Then, I believe, I shall go to the opera with Lady

Charles; and I shall, perhaps, just look in for half an hour at the Duchess of Arlington's."

"You are killing yourself, Gertrude — absolutely killing yourself—you look wretchedly—I must put a stop to this—we must leave this town."

"We shall talk of that to-morrow, mamma—good bye," cried the Countess, as she flew away to her dressing-room, anxious to avoid all unpleasant discussion.

She half expected to meet Colonel Delmour at dinner, but she was mistaken. At all events, there could not be a doubt of seeing him at the opera; and to the opera she went with Lady Charles, escorted by two or three fashionable men. But Delmour was not there; and she watched the opening of every box, to see whether he would not yet enter. Her whole attention absorbed in this single point of observation, she neither saw nor heard any thing else. She was merely conscious that her companions were amused at something, she knew not—cared not what; till at last Lady Charles, touching her on the arm, said—

"Do, Lady Rossville, take a little share of our diversion, bad as it is; that odd little nid-nodding face is too good to be kept all to ourselves; and 'tis so comical, all its nods and grimaces seem as if directed to our box."

"It is very savage that none of us will return the compliment," said Lord Ilfrington.

"It will be no sinecure," said Mr Vavasour; "there must be a prodigious arrear, and still accumulating;" as a fresh succession of nods ensued.

"We must draw lots," said Lord Ilfrington; "but Vavasour has the strongest head of the party."

While this was going on Lady Rossville had looked to the spot indicated; and there, in the centre of the pit, was to be seen a long small throat, with a pretty little, broad, smirking, delighted-looking face on the

top of it, surmounted by a most elaborate pile of hair, dressed in all the possible varieties of style, combining Grecian braids, and Gothic bows, and Tuscan curls, which seemed to vibrate with renewed vigour, as the Countess looked in that direction.

"Surely," thought she, "that is a face I have seen somewhere;" but she still looked on it with a vacant eye, till at once it flashed upon her that the face, and the head, and the nods, were all combined in the person of her cousin, Mrs Augustus Larkins! As if to confirm the fact, Mr Augustus himself, a caricature of the reigning fashions, turned round and joined his bows to his Lilly's nods. On first coming to town Gertrude had heard from Mrs St Clair that they were in the country, which had proved rather a relief; and from that time to the present no thought of Mr or Mrs Larkins had ever crossed her brain;—and now to be recognised by them in this public manner, where they were only conspicuous to be laughed at! The Countess felt her very temples glow; and, with an exclamation at the heat of the house, she drew back, then rose and took a chair in the back of the box.

"How mean, how silly I am!" thought she to herself, "that *dare* not acknowledge my own relations, for fear of sharing in the pitiful ridicule of two or three people who are nothing to me!—O, I could beat myself for my folly!—Ah, Delmour knows me better than I know myself, and I have quarrelled with him because he does so!" and tears of mortification and disappointment rose to her eyes.—"I will get the better of this paltry feeling," said she to herself; and again she returned to the front of the box, determined to acknowledge her cousin; but the ballet was drawing near a close, and Mr and Mrs Larkins devoted their whole attention to it;—then came the bustle and confusion of breaking up; and Gertrude began to think

she should have her good resolutions for her pains, when again the good-humoured Lilly turned round her bright, joyous face, and Lady Rossville gave her a smile, and a bow of recognition. But the next moment she felt her cheeks glow as she beheld the whole party, as if touched by electricity, face about simultaneously with looks of eager expectation. Again she turned away, and only breathed freely when she found herself in her carriage.

Delmour was not at the Duchess of Arlington's. Lady Charles expressed her astonishment at not finding him in any of his usual haunts, and Gertrude disclaimed all knowledge of his proceedings with as much indifference as she could assume.

"He is probably at the Duchess of St Ives'," said Lady Stanley,—"she has a musical party, I believe, to-night."

Again the Countess found the heat insupportable, and her easy good-humoured chaperon left the party with her as soon as her carriage could be got.

Gertrude returned home, wearied in body, and wretched in mind. All the worst qualities of her nature had been called forth and excited during the day—resentment, envy, pride, jealousy, had all been felt, and some of their leaven still wrought in her breast. "Oh, how I hate myself! and how hideous I look!" thought she, as she glanced at herself in a mirror.—"Is this pleasure? Ah! how different from the sweet serene days I passed at Rossville!—but there I was not the vain, foolish, fantastic thing I am here. Lyndsay was right when he told me I should never find my happiness in what the world calls pleasure!" And the admired and envied Lady Rossville owned for the time that to be admired was but vanity—and to be envied but vexation of spirit.

Chapter lxxxiv.

Perish those who have said our good things before us!
DONATUS.

BUT a sound sleep and a bright sun had wonderful effects in dispelling solemn thoughts; and the following morning found Gertrude's mind again gay with ideas of happiness, and her beauty restored to all its native freshness. She tried to think how she ought to receive Delmour; but she never could study a part,—she must always be swayed by circumstances, or by impulses; and to these she committed herself.

"Perhaps I shall find him already below," thought she, and, in that half-formed expectation, she hastened to breakfast.—"There may be some mistake," was the next idea that occurred; "those people are all so stupid!" and she rang the bell.—"I am at home to every body this morning."

"Every body, my lady?"

"Yes, every body."

She dawdled over her breakfast,—again murmured at the rapidity of her time-piece, while in her heart she felt the slowness of time itself. Amongst her letters was one from Anne Black to the same effect as Lyndsay's.

"I am quite resolved," said she, as she read it, "that Mr Leslie shall have that church—all I will concede is, that I shall first convince Delmour of the propriety of it. To be sure, I may answer Lyndsay's letter now;" and she took up a pen; "but I think I began one yesterday, which I left in my dressing-room; I may as well finish it as begin another." The entrance of Mrs St Clair added another to the many excuses for procrastination.

That lady had by some means discovered that a mis-

understanding had taken place between the Countess and Colonel Delmour, though she was ignorant of the cause of it; and she deemed it more politic to take no notice of it, that she might not be suspected of any sinister design in wishing to get her daughter out of London. But, before she had an opportunity of beginning an oration on the subject, Lady Rossville held out her cousin's letter to her, saying—

"By-the-by, mamma, do you know Mr Bauld, the minister of Rossville, is dead, and I mean to bestow the church upon William Leslie?—Here is a letter from Anne upon the subject."

Mrs St Clair looked very solemn. "You forget you have guardians to consult upon these occasions, Gertrude."

"I had a letter from Edward yesterday; he is very anxious for it, and Anne says her father will not object to it. Lord Millbank, you know, is a mere name, and of course you must approve of it, mamma."

"No—I do not approve of your being instrumental to the degrading of your uncle's daughter into the wife of your parish minister.—If she will throw herself away, let it be in some remote situation; but don't let her bring her poverty and contempt to our very door."

"She may be poor; but I am sure she never can be despised, mamma."

"Poverty and contempt generally go hand in hand in this world," said Mrs St Clair. "She cannot possibly afford to dress herself even upon an occasion so as to be fit to appear at your table as your cousin, though merely as the minister's wife she might pass without observation."

"She is so gentle and ladylike in her manners, and so unassuming in her dress, that I am sure I never could be ashamed of either."

"Then she can scarcely afford hats and shoes, certainly not stockings and gloves, to her children; and you would enjoy very much, every time you went outside your gate, to be followed by a troop of half-naked urchins staring after their fine lady cousin."

"But, mamma, I promised——"

"But at present you have no right to perform; you are a minor, you are under pupilage; it is your guardians you must be guided by; wait till you are of age, and then do as you think proper; by that time a much better living may be in your gift, for this, I understand, is one of the poorest."

The discussion was stopped; for just then there drew up an equipage, somewhat of a different style from those which usually graced the Countess's door. It was a very large, heavy, roomy-looking coach, evidently built to carry six, of a strong salmon colour, with grass-green hammer-cloth, and green and orange liveries. The general effect was shocking to the eye of taste, and Gertrude uttered an exclamation of horror as she caught a glance of it. It appeared to be literally as full as it could hold, as sundry bonnets were to be seen; and it was some minutes before Mr Larkins could extricate himself from the company within, and several more elapsed before Mrs Larkins emerged. Then followed another lady, and another, in less time; and all four were actually in the hall before Lady Rossville had presence of mind to take any precautions against this irruption.

Mr and Mrs Augustus Larkins, Miss Larkins, Miss Barbara Larkins, were now announced; and much bowing and courtesying, and introducing took place, and the good-natured simple Lilly seemed as though she never would weary of shaking hands and expressing her delight at the sight of her aunt and cousin. At length they were all seated, and then

apologies commenced for not having been to wait upon them sooner.

"You must have thought it very unkind," said she; "but we have been staying at old Mr Larkins' beautiful villa, Willow Bank, and we only came back to town the day before yesterday,—and how odd it was that we should see each other first at the opera! I saw you didn't know me at first; but Augustus said, he daresay'd you were angry because I had not been to wait upon you; but, I assure you, it was only the day before yesterday we came to town, and yesterday we couldn't get old Mr Larkins' coach, for he wanted it himself, but we have got it to-day; and old Mrs Larkins came with us, but she has hurt her leg, and finds it very troublesome to get out, so she hopes you'll excuse her."

"Chawming owse this, mem," observed Mr Augustus, surveying the apartment all round.

"Monsous nice owse, indeed," said Miss Larkins.

"Sweet purty owse it is," said Miss Barbara Larkins.

"Well, mem, you have been to our theatres of course?" inquired Mr Augustus.

Lady Rossville answered in the negative.

"Good la, mem, it an't possible!—Why, then, you have seen nothing!—S'pose we make a party for Drury Lane some of these nights?"

A thundering rap at the door here proclaimed other visitors, and Gertrude thought she should have swooned when the Duchess of St Ives was announced. She rose to receive her in the other drawing-room;—but she was too late—the Duchess was already in the very heart of the Larkinses.

"How do you do, dear Lady Rossville? I heard you were taken ill at the Duchess of Arlington's last night, and I felt quite anxious about you; but you seem pretty well to-day?"

This was uttered in that tone of insolent, condescending superiority, which is intended at once to convey an impression of the speaker's own triumphant happiness, and their commiseration for the person they are addressing. Gertrude tried to repel it, but she was no adept in dissimulation; and her attempt at gaiety failed when she answered, that she had merely been fatigued by the length of the ballet at the opera, and overcome by the excessive heat of the Duchess's rooms.

"I judged wisely, then, it seems," said the Duchess, carelessly, "in having my own little quiet party at home; though, to own the truth, I believe I was rather wise by compulsion, as I had two or three friends dining with me, who positively would not go away, and I was forced to sing to them till I actually made myself hoarse," giving a little affected cough as she spoke.

Gertrude's colour rose, and her heart beat; but she made no reply. Mrs St Clair, therefore, thought it necessary to say something, if only to prevent the Larkinses from getting in a word.

"Your grace's musical powers, it seems, have greater attractions than even the wonder of the day, the celebrated Catalani."

"O dear no," said the Duchess, in a sort of careless, contemptuous manner, as if she disdained to be complimented;—"but 'tis pleasant to sing with those who understands one's style of singing. There is only one person I know who can sing '*Felice chi vi mira*,' that is, in the way I sing it."

That was Colonel Delmour's favourite song, and one Gertrude and he had often sung together; and she had heard him mention the Duchess of St Ives's singing, as something fine in its way, though in a different style from hers. She felt that her agitation would betray her if she attempted to carry on the conversation, and she was glad even to turn to the

Larkinses, who, attracted by the splendid binding of some books which lay upon one of the tables had begun to inspect, or rather to handle them.

"This is beautiful," said Mrs Larkins, displaying some fine engravings in one of them to her sisters-in-law ;—"I never saw this before—'Fisk, by Mrs Tigg,'" reading the title of it.

"Peseechye, my dear," whispered Mr Larkins, as if a little ashamed of her mal-pronunciation.

"Dear! is that Fishie?" said Miss Larkins ;—"a sweet purty thing it is."

Gertrude could almost have cried at this Malaprop murder of "Psyche, by Mrs Tighe," while the Duchess had recourse to her little affected cough to conceal the play of her muscles.

"Apropos of music, which we are talking of," said she, "pray, is not Colonel Delmour some relation of yours? I think he told me you were somehow cousins —how very well he sings '*Felice chi vi mira!*'"

"Yes, I believe Colonel Delmour is my cousin," said Lady Rossville, now wrought up to an air of haughty indifference ; "and he does sing some things very well, in particular '*Vorrei che almen per gioco.*'"

"Ah, that, I suppose, he keeps for his particular favourites," said the Duchess, with an insolent smile —"as he has never sung it to me. I shall certainly reproach him with his treachery when I see him. Meanwhile, good morning, dear Lady Rossville ; I am quite happy to find you so well ;" and with a squeeze of the hand to the Countess, a slight bow to Mrs St Clair, and a supercilious stare at the Larkinses, as they all rose and bowed and courtseyed with profound respect, she swept out of the room. Gertrude was much too wretched to know or care what passed during the remainder of the visit. She heard something said about a dinner, and about a party to the play, and about old Mr

Larkins' villa, and old Mrs Larkins' leg; and in the inanity of despair she assented to every thing, and they at length took leave, impatient to carry the tidings of all they had seen and heard to their less noble acquaintances.

—o—

Chapter xxxv.

. . . . . My truant heart
Forgets each lesson that resentment taught,
And in thy sight knows only to be happy.
Mason's Elfrida.

LIKE all those who are the slaves of their feelings, Lady Rossville found she must fly to one extreme or other—she must either shut herself up in her chamber, and refuse to be comforted, or she must plunge still deeper into the whirlpool of folly and extravagance to drown thought. As persons in a similar state of mind generally do, she chose both evils—she first wept the bitter tears of jealousy and mortification, then ordered her carriage, and, throwing on a veil, drove away to Lady Charles Arabin, to get her assistance in choosing some dresses and jewels.

"I may as well order the furniture I want for Rossville too," said she to herself—"I shall be there very soon now;" and the tears again sprung to her eyes, as Rossville and all its tender recollections rose to her mind; but she strove to put them down with the splendid plans she tried to busy her imagination about.

On being ushered into Lady Charles's drawing-room, she found her surrounded by gentlemen, children, and dogs; and the bustle of her first entrance prevented her all at once from recognising Colonel Delmour amongst the number, and when she did a mutual bow was the only acknowledgment.

One by one the idlers dropped off, the children were sent to dinner, and only Lady Charles and her two friends remained. Gertrude then made her request, to which she acceded, adding—

"Though, as I have got a little cold to-day, and your carriage is open, I must wrap up—so pray don't tire to death if I should be ten minutes at my toilette;" and, with a smile, she disappeared.

Silence ensued. Gertrude carefully avoided looking in the direction where Delmour was, lest he should construe it into an appeal to him; and she almost feared to breathe, lest he should imagine she had spoken. She flattered herself she was the very emblem of indifference and abstraction; but even through the folds of her veil Delmour marked, with secret triumph, her quivering lip and tearful eyes. At length this state became too painful to be endured. She rose with the intention of passing into the adjoining drawing-room, when Delmour, approaching her with an air of agitation, said—

"Although I should not have presumed to seek an interview with Lady Rossville in her own house again after having been once turned from it, yet I cannot allow the present opportunity to pass without making an attempt to obtain from her justice what I have now little hope of owing to her tenderness." He stopped in emotion—but Gertrude felt her tears ready to spring forth, and made no reply. "All I ask is, that you would hear what I have to offer in excuse for my conduct, rash and unwarrantable as it must appear to you, until, in some degree, explained."

"I was wrong," said Lady Rossville, summoning all her pride to her aid; "the step you had taken was one of so extraordinary a nature that I certainly ought to have heard what you had to offer in vindication of it."

This was a more prompt and spirited reply than

Colonel Delmour had reckoned upon, and, for a moment or two, he was silent and disconcerted; he then said—

"I find I have mistaken your character, or rather I have judged it by my own. Had I been master of the universe, my pride, my happiness would have been, that the object of my love should, from the moment I loved, be the partner also of my power, be it what it might; but your sentiments are different from mine, it seems."

"I, too, should have had a pleasure in sharing the gifts of fortune, whatever they were," said the Countess; "but to have them wrested from me——"

"But I never sought to wrest them from you," said Delmour, with earnestness; "though, being rather rough and blunt in speech, I perhaps did not go so wooingly to work as some one more designing would have done. I told you, too briefly perhaps, the simple truth, that at your wish I had used every means to get myself exchanged into the Guards; but it was a matter of difficulty, and—why should I scruple to own it?—of expense, too, beyond my means; but this I was too proud to own to you, and I have been punished for it. —In short, not to bore you with tiresome business detail, Monteith proposed that I should engage to—to use my influence with you to provide for this old tutor of his, who is a sort of dead weight upon the family; and I, in the belief that I was—pardon my presumption —gratifying you, foolishly enough pledged myself to that effect."

"Nay, more—that you would obtain it," said Lady Rossville, still struggling against betraying her tenderness.

"Perhaps I did, in the sanguine hope that, when the time came for fulfilling my promise, I should then have acquired greater influence with you than I can flatter myself I now possess. But that hope is at an end.

However disgraceful it may be to fail in my promise, disgrace itself could scarce be more intolerable than the misery I have endured under your displeasure."

"And yet you could sing with the Duchess of St Ives?" said Gertrude, reproachfully, while her cheek flushed, and the tear swelled to the very brim.

"Did I? It may be so, for I can scarcely tell what I have done for the last four-and-twenty hours.—Yes, now I recollect Lord Westerton forcing me to her house, and being compelled to sing with her something or other—I forget what—that I used, I believe, to sing with her before the flood—that is, when I rather admired her bravura style of beauty and of singing; but these days are past—*never* to return!"

Gertrude's tears, hitherto with difficulty restrained, now dropped from her eyes; but they were tears of joy and tenderness. "Ah, Delmour!" said she, as she gave him her hand, "we have both been to blame;—you have been rash, and I hasty; but you shall keep your promise." She rose, and placed herself at a writing-table. "What is the name of the person you wish to befriend?" asked she, as she began to write; but she sighed as the name of William Leslie presented itself to her mind's eye. Colonel Delmour could not tell the name; but she wrote a few lines, engaging to bestow the church and living of Rossville upon ————, then presented the paper to her lover, who, with affected generosity, for some time refused to receive it; but at length the Countess prevailed, and he consented to keep his promise at the expense of hers.

Still Gertrude did not feel happy; but the usual panacea was applied, viz. squandering money in dissipating thought. Colonel Delmour was of the shopping party, and encouraged her in every expensive whim. The most magnificent orders were given for furnishing Rossville with all possible expedition; and, to crown

her transient delusive pleasure, when they met the Duchess of St Ives Delmour's only salutation to her was a distant bow.

"Do you go to her assembly to-night?" inquired the Countess of her lover.

"Not unless to accompany you."

"Then, pray don't, dear Lady Rossville," said Lady Charles, who was of the opposite faction to the Duchess. "Do, both of you, come and dine quietly with Arabin and me. My cold is really too bad to admit of my going out in an evening; and, you know, we never give dinners, so we shall be a party *quarré*—no bad thing, sometimes."

Gertrude consented; and the quiet evening was passed partly in arranging a ball to be given by her, and partly in losing fifty guineas to Lord Charles at *écarté*.

"What an odd jumble of a day this has been!" thought she, as she laid her head on her pillow; "and yet I have had a great deal of pleasure in it too." But she sighed as she said it; for not all the delusions of her own heart, or the blandishments of her lover, could stifle the voice of conscience, or conceal from her that she had acted unjustly and unwisely.

"What shall I say to Lyndsay?" was the first thought that presented itself the following morning; but, by the time she was dressed, she heard Delmour's well-known knock.—"I fear I shall not have leisure to write to him to-day," said she, as she hastened to receive her lover, glad of the excuse for delaying the irksome task. Then came the "strenuous idleness" of the day, most unremittingly persevered in for many successive days, till at length it became too late to think of writing at all.—It would be better now to wait till she returned to Rossville, she could explain the matter so much better in person than she could do by letter. Alas! she took not into account (how few of the great

and the gay do!) the thought of that "hope deferred" which "maketh the heart sick," and which was experienced in all its intensity, as post after post arrived, and brought no tidings for those whose happiness hung upon her word.

Anne wrote again, and a blush of shame and remorse stained Lady Rossville's cheek as she beheld her cousin's hand-writing; but she opened all her trifling billets, and read all her cards and newspapers, and pampered her dog, and made her bullfinch pipe to her; but still she could not find leisure to break the seal of her cousin's letter! Her mind was now averse to exert itself upon any thing that did not bring some semblance of pleasure along with it; and it was not so much the want of leisure as the utter inability to employ what she had to any useful purpose, that thus bereft her of all self-command and power of action.

The thought she takes is, how to take no thought;

an art in which she was every day becoming a greater adept.

She went, however, with her mother to return Mrs Larkins' visit; and found the romantic Lilly settled to her heart's content in a dull, vulgar, well-furnished house in the heart of the city, talking Cockney by way of English, and overflowing with rapture at her own blissful lot. She pressed most vehemently for her aunt and cousin to fix a day to dine with them—Augustus would be so disappointed if they did not do it—he was so anxious they should meet some near relations of his, Sir Christopher and Lady Huggins—he had been lord mayor once, and was a remarkably genteel, nice man; and Lady Huggins was such a nice woman!—but, indeed, Augustus was very petikler in his friends, and had no ideer of visiting vulgar people.—But if they would not fix it now, Augustus and she would call in Park

Lane some day very soon, for she knew he would take no denial—he kept a gig, and could drive her there any day. At this threat, Lady Rossville promised to look over the list of her engagements when she returned home; and if she had a day disengaged before leaving town, she would dine with them.

Mrs St Clair here engaged that a day should certainly be allotted for the purpose; and at length they were permitted to depart, with much lamentation that Augustus was from home, and repeated assurances of calling again some day soon.

In hopes of averting that evil, Gertrude, upon consulting her engagements, found a day disengaged, and it was settled accordingly that it should be given to the Larkinses. Mrs St Clair, indeed, rather anticipated pleasure from a party there. She was sure of being of consequence, and of making and of causing a fuss and a bustle; a thing she could by no manner of means effect in the higher circles, where she could not even shine in the reflected lustre of her daughter.

———o———

Chapter lxxxvj.

O, fair ladies, how plesing war this lyfe of yours, if it sould ever abyde, and then in the end that we might pas to hevin with all this gay gear.—John Knox:

MEANWHILE the day of the ball arrived, and even in the greatest of great houses a ball causes more or less of confusion and commotion. Mrs St Clair had in vain remonstrated against it. Her remonstrances, indeed, were rather reproaches, as the cards had been issued before she had even been consulted; and the preparations, made upon the most splendid scale, had all been arranged by the Countess and

Colonel Delmour, aided by some of their friends. They were to come early to assist her in receiving the company; and she was dressed, and her apartments lighted in due time. She walked through them with almost childish delight. All was light, and flowers, and perfume; and her own figure, radiant in beauty and pleasure, flashed upon her in all directions from the magnificent mirrors, as they gave back the brilliant scene in almost endless succession. She had stopped at one of them to alter something about her hair, when in the long vista she perceived a servant ushering in a gentleman, who she immediately concluded must be Delmour. She turned round to meet him with a smile; but, to her amazement, she beheld—not her lover, but her guardian, Lyndsay!

"Mr Lyndsay! my dear cousin!" exclaimed she; but there was more of surprise than pleasure in the accent in which the words were uttered; "how—where have you dropped from?—the moon?"

"No, dear Gertrude," said he, as he affectionately shook her hand; "you have given me a long journey, but not quite so long a one as that—I come from Scotland."

"From Scotland!" repeated Lady Rossville, in some confusion, as her conscience smote her at the sound; "and how long have you been in town?"

"Only since the morning—that is, my morning, which, I suppose, is your daybreak; for I called—such is my vulgarity!—about noon, and was told my lady was not up. I left my card, and called again at three, when I was told my lady had just gone out; and here I am now, it seems, just in time for my lady's ball."

"Will you, indeed, stay?" cried Gertrude, rather at a loss to ascertain whether he were in jest or earnest; "that will add so much to my pleasure—that

is, I—but, indeed, I never heard you had called, and I forgot to look over my cards this morning."

"Is that all you have forgot, Gertrude?" inquired Lyndsay, in a somewhat reproachful tone.

"I fear not," said she, with a smile and a blush; but the one was forced, the other natural; "but this is not the time for me to remember all I have forgot."

"When *is* the time then, Gertrude?"

"O, any time, you know, that—that—any morning——"

"Any morning sometimes means no day, does it not?" said Lyndsay. "But I have come far on purpose to see you, and to talk with you, since you will not write to me, and I *must* know when you will be disengaged."

"Spoken like a guardian, indeed!" said the Countess, with an affected laugh; "but since you *must* know, I *must* candidly confess that I really cannot, at this precise moment, recollect what my engagements are.—To-morrow, I know, I made a party to go to Richmond by water to breakfast. I wish to get out of the way of the *debris* of to-night."

"And what follows?"

"Why, we shall probably dine there, and return in the evening, when I have several engagements."

"And the day after to-morrow—can I see you then?"

"What day is that?—Friday. I rather think—yes, indeed, I remember now I engaged to give Tournerelli a sitting at a very early hour; and as I forgot once before, if I fail this time he will certainly make a Gorgon or a Medusa of me. But you will join our party to Richmond to-morrow, and then we can talk it all over—pray do."

Lyndsay sighed. "Ah, Gertrude! what changed days since those we passed at Rossville together! I

little thought then you would have grudged half an hour from your pleasures to bestow upon your friend!"

"You surely would not have me break my engagements?" said the Countess, with some pique.

"On the contrary, it was to remind you of them chiefly that brought me here," said Lyndsay, mildly but gravely; "but I would have you choose the lesser evil—that which will give least pain to others. Your gay friends will not break their hearts, I dare say, although you should disappoint them to-morrow; but there are others, Gertrude, with whom you have made engagements of more consequence, and whose happiness is in your hands—it is for them I would intercede."

Lady Rossville coloured deeply, and rising said, "It will have rather a ridiculous effect for you and me to be found sitting here in grave debate, discussing our parish business in the ball-room—the place is, at least, as ill chosen as the time," added she, somewhat haughtily, as she moved away. For a moment Lyndsay seemed too much hurt to reply; but recollecting himself, he said—

"Upon my own account I certainly would not intrude where I am evidently so unwelcome, but I have undertaken a task which I must perform; I have engaged to remind Lady Rossville of her promise—and more, to get that promise fulfilled."

The Countess remained silent, but her countenance betrayed the agitation of her mind. At that moment the knocker sounded an alarm.

"You have refused to fix an hour to see me," said Lyndsay; "I will therefore name one to wait upon you—to-morrow at one I will be here."

Gertrude made no reply, but hurried forward to receive Lady Charles, Colonel Delmour, and a succession of friends, who now came pouring in.

Delmour's astonishment at sight of Lyndsay could

only be equalled by his dissatisfaction, and the meeting on both sides was cold and distant. Mrs St Clair now made her appearance; Lady Augusta and her daughters followed; and Lyndsay was soon overwhelmed with expressions of surprise and pleasure from all quarters, but he contrived to disengage himself from them, and disappeared.

"Lyndsay has been giving you a godly exhortation against the sinfulness of dancing, I suppose," said Delmour, as he led Gertrude to open the ball; "and you look almost as grave as though you had the fear of the kirk-session before your eyes."

Gertrude smiled; and the exhilarating effects of the music, and all the concomitants of a brilliant ball, soon dispelled the unpleasant thoughts which Lyndsay's appearance had excited. All was enchantment—while it lasted; and the Countess believed she was happy.

But the morrow told another tale, when she awoke to the realities of life, and found the delusion had vanished, leaving only dust and rubbish to mark where it had been. It was near the hour when Lyndsay had said he was to call, but she had not promised to receive him. It was disagreeable to see any body that morning —her head ached—her house was in confusion—her servants were all stupid with wine or sleep—nothing was as it ought to be; then two o'clock was the hour when she was to set off for Richmond, and she should be so hurried!—No, it was impossible—quite impossible—it was unreasonable to expect that she should be able to enter on business all at once so wholly unprepared, and she resolved to send her excuse; but just then her maid entered to say that Mr Lyndsay was below, but, as he was in no hurry, begged her ladyship might not be disturbed. There was no evading this; and, with a mixture of haste and delay, she prepared for the interview.

Chapter xxxviij.

. . . . . You do imagine,
No doubt, you have talked wisely, and confuted
London past all defence.

JAMES SHIRLEY.

IF Lyndsay had parted in displeasure, as Gertrude thought he had done the night before, all traces of it had completely vanished. But there was a settled seriousness in his look and manner, which made her feel that levity would be misplaced; and if any thing so graceful could have felt awkward, she would have done so. As it was, she was evidently embarrassed. She rung for her chocolate—caressed her dog—spoke to her bird—ordered away some flowers that were too powerful—desired her maid to fetch her some *eau de Cologne*—and, in short, seemed bent upon keeping up a bustle around her, as if to prevent the possibility of any thing like settled conversation. Lyndsay sat calmly waiting till all this should be over; and at length, her orders having been all obeyed, she began to feel ashamed of such trifling, and allowed the servants to leave the room without any more frivolous commands.

"I think I am very good-natured—am I not?" said she, making an attempt to rally her spirits, as she sipped her chocolate, "to admit you this morning, considering how ill you used me last night in running away from my ball; and now to come thus behind the scene, only to see how ugly we look after all is over, is scarcely fair."

"The spectre of pleasure is perhaps not more beautiful than other spectres," said Lyndsay; "but I have something of a wizard's eye in these matters, and last night's scene, brilliant as it was, could not impose upon

me.—I have learnt to distinguish real from artificial happiness."

"But my happiness, I do assure you, was quite real while it lasted," said Gertrude, gaily: "the only melancholy part of it was, that it did not last quite so long as one could have wished."

"Is your happiness, then, of so evanescent a nature, Gertrude?" asked Lyndsay.

"How very literal you are become!" answered she, attempting to laugh;—"you seem to have forgot the way to jest."

"Not when there is good occasion," said Lyndsay, gravely: "but at present, I confess, I am not in a jesting mood."

"How unfortunate! for I am not in a serious one; so we shall never agree—unless, indeed, you agree to be of my party to Richmond. Come, you surely cannot refuse me that? However you might despise my ball as an artificial pleasure, you must, by the same rule, approve of my *fête champêtre* as a piece of real rural felicity. Now, don't be so churlish as to refuse. Do consent to be gay and happy like other people."

"Are you happy, Gertrude?" asked Lyndsay, still more gravely.

"To be sure—why should you doubt it?"

"Because I have always looked upon true happiness as a generous, diffusive sentiment, that sought to impart a portion of its own blessedness to all around. Such it was with you, Gertrude, at Rossville; but now you seem to confine it within narrower bounds—none of it finds its way there now!"

Gertrude blushed, while she attempted to smile, and said—

"I am keeping it all to carry there along with me. I mean to return to Rossville very soon now, and I intend that you should all be very happy to see me."

"Some, I trust, will have good cause," said Lyndsay; "but, in the mean time, there are two young lovers who are suffering not merely the tortures of suspense, but the aggravation of an evil report; yet it seems so incredible a one that I almost hesitate to repeat it, you will think us country folks so credulous."

"Pray let me hear it," said the Countess, faintly.

"It is said that you have actually given away the living of Rossville, which you had promised to young Leslie, to a superannuated *bon vivant* hanger-on of the Monteiths."

Lady Rossville's colour mounted to her very temples, and at that moment a servant entered to say her ladyship's carriage was in waiting. She rose, and stammered out something about her engagement—her party, and she knew not what, as she was moving towards the door.

"I too have an engagement to keep," said Lyndsay, calmly, but very gravely, and he took her hand and led her to her seat; "I have engaged to prove the falsity of that report from your own lips."

But Lady Rossville remained silent, evidently struggling with her feelings.

"Gertrude, you *could* not be so false to others, so unjust to yourself?" said Lyndsay, with emotion.

Shame, sorrow, and pride, all swelled in Lady Rossville's heart almost to suffocation, but pride prevailed; and, even while her burning cheeks and downcast eyes betrayed her consciousness of wrong, she answered, with an air of haughty indignation—

"One part of the report you are certainly at liberty to contradict—I never promised the living of Rossville to Mr Leslie."

"You promised to provide for him when it should be in your power."

"And I will yet do so—but, in the present instance,

it is not in my power; and now, Mr Lyndsay, excuse me if I must begone."

"No, it is not thus we must part," said Lyndsay, in a tone so firm, yet so sad, as awed the Countess, even in spite of herself, and she remained passively waiting for what was to follow. "If we part thus, we may never meet again as we have done"—he stopped in some emotion, and then proceeded—"Before I became your guardian I had learned to consider myself as your friend, and I had flattered myself the confidence you then honoured me with would have been continued, but it has not proved so; I appeal to yourself, Gertrude, has it?"

For a moment Gertrude could not answer, but at length she said—

"My sentiments remain unchanged; but surely you might know enough of a London life to make allowance for any omissions I may have been guilty of."

"I have—I do make allowance for them," said Lyndsay;—"I knew all the dangers that awaited one of your ardent, confiding, susceptible, but volatile nature—I knew that the adulation of the world would prove incense too intoxicating to be resisted by one who had not yet looked through the shallowness of earthly grandeur; I do not, therefore, reproach you with your neglect, your unkindness, your almost boundless extravagance—these are faults that may yet be repaired; but broken promises and power misused—Ah, Gertrude! what can make up for these?"

Lady Rossville made a gesture of impatience, as if to conceal her agitation; then said—

"I have already disclaimed the promise—the power is my own; I did not imagine I was accountable for it to Mr Lyndsay."

"No, Gertrude, you are not accountable to me—you are accountable to a higher tribunal, even to God

himself, for the choice you make of his ministers. I am aware that in the world the appointment of a clergyman is reckoned a slight thing, but I view it differently: it is the most solemn—the most responsible act you may ever be called upon to perform; and, as your guardian, I protest against the choice you have made."

"It is too late," said Gertrude, in a faltering voice.

"No, it cannot be too late. You have been misled, betrayed into one engagement at the expense of another. If you will give me leave, I will yet extricate you from it."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Countess, in an agitated tone, as she shrunk from the thoughts of encountering Delmour's displeasure.—"Why then tease me by prolonging this painful and needless discussion?—I will not, I cannot retract what I have done."

"Ah, Gertrude! do not suffer a false principle of honour thus to sway all your better feelings. If no higher motive can influence you in this, at least let me conjure you by the friendship of former days—by the affection you bear your cousin, who loves you so tenderly she will not believe in the possibility of your deceiving her——"

"Oh, Edward! do not, do not torture me!" cried Gertrude, as she covered her face with her hand.

"It is to save you from the torture of an upbraiding conscience, dear Gertrude, that I thus afflict you. It is to save you from mocking God, from betraying the immortal interests of the people he has committed to you. The happiness of two amiable interesting beings is in your hands; you are their only earthly stay at present: should you fail them, their disappointment may be bitter, but the reproaches of your own heart will be bitterer still!"

Lady Rossville's heart heaved, and, in spite of her efforts to restrain them, tears burst from her eyes; but at that moment she thought she heard Delmour's knock. She started up, and hastily brushed away the tear from her cheek:—"Let there be an end of this," said she —"I can hear no more."

"Yes," said Lyndsay, seizing her hand to detain her, while his own shook with emotion—"you must hear yet more—you must hear me resign from henceforth the office of your guardian; 'tis a mockery I can no longer endure."

Lady Rossville made no reply. A thousand contending feelings struggled in her breast; but she repressed them all with that force which is the result of conscious weakness, and with the calmness of one determined to do wrong she merely bent her head in acquiescence.

"Should the time ever arrive when Lady Rossville, gay and prosperous as she now is, should want the aid or counsel of a friend,"—Lyndsay's voice faltered, but the Countess remained calm and motionless—"Gertrude, will you remember me?"—But Gertrude averted her face to hide the anguish that filled her heart.—"At least, you will say 'Farewell' to me?"

"Farewell," said Gertrude, in an assumed tone of indifference, and without turning round. Lyndsay dropped the hand he held in his, and in another instant was gone.

It was then Gertrude's long-repressed feelings burst forth in all their violence. "Unkind, unjust, ungrateful that I am!" exclaimed she to herself, as she wept in an agony of remorse.—"I have lost the best, the truest friend; and he thinks me—Oh, what a cold-hearted, unfeeling wretch must he think me!—How must I have behaved, when even Lyndsay, the mild, forgiving, disinterested Lyndsay, has renounced me!"

But her sorrow and her self-reproaches were checked by the entrance of Delmour, who, after knocking, had stopped to speak to a friend who was passing, and while so engaged Lyndsay had gone out. The cousins did not speak; but, from the expression of his countenance, Delmour at once perceived he had no cause for jealousy.

But, for the first time, the sight of her lover failed to bring pleasure to Gertrude, as she contrasted his gay triumphant mien with Lyndsay's mild pleading look and melancholy air; and when he accosted her with an exclamation of astonishment, she turned from him, as she thought "It is he who has caused me to act thus!"

"My dear Gertrude," cried he—"what is the meaning of all this? But I guess how it is—you have had a puritanical lecture from the Very Reverend Edward Lyndsay; and I am not surprised you should weep at it, were it only from weariness."

But Gertrude still leant her head dejectedly upon her hand, and only sighed in answer.

"By Heaven!" cried Delmour, passionately,—"he shall answer to me for every tear he has made you shed."

"Beware how you add to the sorrow you have already brought upon me, Delmour," said Gertrude in a mournful but decided tone;—"I have forgiven much, and may forgive more, but I will *never* forgive insult or injury offered to Edward Lyndsay on my account."

Haughty and overbearing as Delmour was, he saw that, on the present occasion, he was not likely to obtain the mastery; and he was piqued to find that it required all his skill and eloquence to prevail upon Lady Rossville to keep her engagement, and join the party to Richmond. At length he prevailed; but she set out with a heavy heart. By degrees, however, the novelty and the gaiety of the scene—the beauty of the day—the

succession of lovely landscapes that met the eye as they glided along—the music—the company—all combined to charm the senses; and Lyndsay was forgotten!

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Chapter lxxxviij.

Something that's bitter will arise
Even amid our jollities. LUCRETIUS.

Penso qual ne parti, qual vi ritorno. METASTASIO.

THE London season was now drawing near a close, and Lady Rossville had run her full career of folly and extravagance. As bills came pouring in upon her from all quarters, she was startled at the magnitude of the sums she had expended, and for which she had now nothing to show but a parcel of gew-gaws, which had ceased with their novelty to afford her any pleasure. She felt almost glad that Lyndsay was no longer her guardian, that he might not see the extent of her imprudence; for even Delmour was surprised when he heard how much she had spent in so short a time. As for Mrs St Clair, this discovery, joined to the disappointment of her other schemes, occasioned her a fit of the jaundice, which put a stop to the Larkinses' dinner; and, as soon as she was able to travel, she was ordered to Cheltenham for the benefit of the waters.—There they accordingly repaired, but not before it had been arranged by the lovers that Colonel Delmour should join them in a short time.

At first Gertrude was pleased with the combination of picturesque beauty and fashionable gaiety which are so happily blended at this celebrated watering-place; but a short time sufficed to dispel the illusion. The amusements wanted the life, splendour, and variety of the

London parties, and the walks and rides were little resorted to; the supreme *bon-ton* of the idlers being to drive or walk backwards and forwards for about the space of a quarter of a mile of dusty street, without intermission for two or three hours, day after day, and week after week, and that with as much settled seriousness as though they were actually fulfilling the high destinies of immortal beings.

> O, how canst thou renounce the boundless store
> Of charms which nature to her votary yields!

But in vain would the minstrel have attempted to sing the beaux and belles of Cheltenham off the burning pavement, even while the dog-star raged, provided the libraries, and confectioners, and toy-shops kept their places. What to them

> The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
> The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
> All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
> And all that echoes to the song of even!

But it was otherwise with Lady Rossville; her taste was not yet so vitiated as to take pleasure in the vapid pastimes of a watering-place; which, however they may amuse and relax the minds of the sick and the studious, can only tend to enfeeble those of the healthy and the gay. She sighed as she thought of her own fair domain — its woods and its waters — its flowers blooming unseen—herself a queen there; while here she was one of a motley throng, with nought to recompense her but stare, and heat, and dust, and pressure. To add to her weariness and chagrin, Delmour had been detained in London on some regimental business, and was not likely to join her before her return to Rossville.

Mrs St Clair's aversion to Colonel Delmour had by

no means diminished: but she found her opposition so perfectly vain, and her attempts to lead her daughter now so futile, that she had almost abandoned both; though not without many severe struggles, and some dark mysterious threats, which, however, the Countess had now learnt to disregard.

At length they bade adieu to Cheltenham; but summer was far advanced, or rather autumn had commenced, before they returned to Rossville. It was with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain that Gertrude beheld it again. Even while her heart bounded at sight of every well-known object, they seemed to reproach her with having lavished her thoughts, her affections, her money, upon worthless baubles and heartless pleasures. Her conscience smote her as she passed some old cottages which she had planned pulling down, and building new and more commodious ones in their place. "Half of what my opera-box cost me would have done that," sighed she. "And that bridge!" as she caught a glimpse of one half-finished; "the poor people must still go two miles round, till my diamond necklace is paid;" and tears of contrition dropped from her eyes.

But it was not so at the castle; for Delmour's orders had superseded Lyndsay's schemes, and, however the poor might suffer, nothing had been left undone there. The conservatory and the garden had been completed, and stocked at an immense expense; the apartments were superbly and tastefully furnished; the theatre was almost finished; and again Gertrude's volatile heart throbbed with pride and pleasure, as she looked on this new creation of taste and fancy, and anticipated the joys yet to come. But, as the novelty abated, again the voice of conscience was heard, and the thoughts of Lyndsay recurred. She wondered whether he would come to visit her upon her return,

and she both wished and dreaded the meeting; but day after day passed on, and Lyndsay came not. Her cousin Anne, too, how could she behold her without shame and confusion of face! But her apprehensions on that score were partly relieved by receiving the following note a few days after her arrival:—

"My dear Lady Rossville,

"I am very sure it will give you pleasure to hear that William has at length been provided for, as I know how much it must have pained you to be unable to fulfil your kind intentions in his favour. But what you could not do yourself your kind friend Mr Lyndsay has done for you. He has so generously interested himself in this affair, that he has got William appointed to the living of Whinbrae; and Mr Turner, who was to have succeeded to that church, he has secured in a secular office of greater emolument, and better suited to his views and sentiments. The only obstacle to our union is therefore now removed; and as we are to have immediate possession of the manse, it is to take place very soon—perhaps in the course of next week. It is to you, under Heaven, that we owe our happiness, by interesting so kind and generous a patron in our behalf. Accept, therefore, my dear Lady Rossville, the united thanks and prayers of

"Your affectionate Anne Black,
"and obliged and grateful William Leslie."

"Kind and generous, indeed!" exclaimed Lady Rossville, as she read this billet, and a blush of shame burned on her cheek. "He has saved me as far as he could from the disgrace of—at best, I fear—equivocation, and from the wretchedness of having disappointed the hopes of those whom I had taught to put their trust in me."

In the overflowing of her heart she wrote to Anne, expressing her participation in her happiness, and giving the sole credit of it to Mr Lyndsay. She could not bring herself to tell her exactly how matters stood; but she assured her again and again that it was to him, and to him only, they were indebted.

She thought she ought also to write to Lyndsay, to thank him for his kindness to her relations; and she took up the pen for that purpose, but she could not write any thing to please herself: one style was too cold and formal for the warmth of her feelings; another too humble and penitential for her pride to stoop to, and Delmour might be displeased.—"No!" exclaimed she, as she threw down the pen, "I cannot write what I feel—I must either say too much or too little. It would be otherwise were we to meet; a few words would set all to rights, and how I wish he would afford me an opportunity of making my peace with him!—I cannot be happy while I think I have forfeited his good opinion.—Surely he will come, and he will be pleased to find I have not forgot all his good lessons;" and she tried to resume the studies and occupations she had begun at his suggestion; but it would not do—the illusions of passion and the vanities of life still maintained their sway over her, and all was dull and joyless that did not administer to one or other. "I shall never be good," sighed she, "according to Lyndsay's notions, so 'tis in vain to try—and perhaps Delmour would not like me so well if I were;" and that argument was conclusive against all farther attempts of the kind.

Colonel Delmour's absence had been protracted much beyond the period assigned by the alarming illness of his brother, whose life at one time had been in imminent danger from a pleuretic attack; the consequence, it was said (as every thing of the kind must either have or be a consequence), of cold caught at a

late sitting of a committee of which he was chairman. He was now better, and as soon as he was sufficiently recovered for his brother to leave him the impatient lover was to set off for Rossville; meanwhile he implored Gertrude to write to him every day, every hour, if possible, as the only alleviation to the tortures of separation. Such was Colonel Delmour's way of telling the story; and, as usual, it contained a portion of truth and falsehood. It was true that his brother had been dangerously ill while he was in London, but it was not true that he was still detained there from that cause. The fact was, he rather dreaded a dull family party at Rossville; for, lover as he was, he was too much a man of the world, too much accustomed to be amused, to be able to devote himself entirely to one object, however much beloved,—and Gertrude was as much beloved by him as any thing could be; but he felt himself now so secure in her affections, that there was not even the stimulants of jealousy or uncertainty to give a zest to their intercourse. In short, Colonel Delmour's heart and affections were so jaded and sophisticated, that simple feelings and simple pleasures had now become stale and insipid. He rather liked the country for two or three months in the autumn with a good party; but to be constantly enacting the sentimental lover, and with no greater variety than Lady Betty and Mrs St Clair, or an interchange of neighbourly visits with some agricultural lord or raw-boned squire—to be bored about county politics or county races—it was more than either his love or his philosophy could endure. At length his brother's convalescence left him no excuse, and he wrote to Gertrude that he would have set off instantly; but as the Arabins, Peverleys, and his friend Ilfrington were preparing to storm Rossville, he had been prevailed upon to wait a day or two, and join the party. A postscript added, that they should probably go by the Lakes, as

Lady Charles had taken a fancy for sketching, and Lord Charles wished to eat char.

Lady Rossville was deeply mortified at this letter. It contained even more than the usual quantity of love superlatives, was elegant on the miseries of separation, and the anticipated happiness of their meeting; but still he did not fly to her—he could submit to wait on the movements of a capricious fine lady, and the taste of an indolent gourmand—and, for the first time, a doubt of the reality of his attachment struck upon her heart. The supposition was too dreadful to be endured, and she shrunk from it as she would have done from the stroke of a dagger. "At least he does not love as I do!" thought she, as she tried to dispel the fast gathering tears that, in spite of herself, rushed to her eyes; "but I was a fool to expect it. Who ever loved so fondly, so truly, as I have done?—and men never love with the devotion of women. But I would have Delmour different from every one else—I would be his all, as he is mine." Then to wounded tenderness succeeded pride. He had besought her to write to him as usual, and mentioned the places where he should expect to find letters from her; but she determined to punish him by her silence, though the punishment would, in the first instance, fall upon herself, as the forbearance of not writing was, probably, at least equal to the disappointment of not receiving her letters.

Gertrude was naturally of an open communicative temper, and the want of a confidant had often been severely felt by her; but she had never met with any one whom she thought perfectly suited to act even that subordinate part. Lady Charles was too much a woman of the world to enter into her enthusiastic notions, the Miss Delmours were too deep in flirtations themselves to be able to listen to anything of the kind at second-hand, and she had formed no other particular

intimacy in London. Her cousin Anne might have done, for she was patient and attentive; but then she was so good, and so flat, and so matter-of-fact in her ideas on the subject, that it was in vain to expect any congeniality there. Hitherto she had contrived to exist without one; but now the want was felt, as sooner or later it must be, in all its loneliness. It would have been such a luxury to have complained of her lover to some considerate friend, who would have defended him, and proved to her that he was right, and she was wrong! Her mother was out of the question—she was the last person to whom she would have uttered a complaint of Delmour, whose name, by a sort of tacit agreement, was seldom mentioned between them. Lady Rossville was mortified, and ashamed too, at discovering what advantage had been taken of her in the appointment of a minister. True, there was nothing positively immoral to be laid to his charge, but an unholy pastor makes an immoral people; and the effects were soon but too visible in the deserted church, the frequented alehouse, the neglected school, the careless because uncared-for people. In this state of restless displeasure, it was a relief to have something to do, however disagreeable in itself; and she therefore acceded to Mrs St Clair's proposal that she should go and visit some of the members of her family, she herself being confined with a cold. Lady Rossville then ordered her carriage, and set forth to try the effects of rapid driving and change of company in dispelling chagrin and ennui.

———o———

Chapter xxxix.

Fair seemly pleasance each to other makes,
With goodly purposes there as they sit.
Fairy Queen.

A name unmusical to Volscian ears,
And harsh in sound to thine.
SHAKESPEARE.

BELLEVUE was her first destination; for she could now endure to meet Anne, since she found her conduct was not viewed in the light she feared it would have been. She was welcomed by Mrs Black with even more than her wonted cordiality; and having dismissed the children, who were in the room with her, she immediately started the subject of Anne's marriage, prefacing her observations with a deep sigh, or rather groan.

"I'm sure we are all much obliged to you, my lady, for refusing to give them your church. I was in great hopes that might have put an end to the thing altogether, and I really believe it would, if it had not been for Mr Lyndsay.—Folk are really ill employed sometimes when they think they're doing good, and it would maybe be just as well if there was less of that kind of interference in the world. As Mr Black says, 'Let ilka sheep hang by its ain shank;' and it might have been long enough before William Leslie would have got a kirk, and in that time there's no saying what might have happened; but now her father's just weary and sick of the subject, and he has given his consent—and what could he do else?—so it will be all over soon now;" and Mrs Black heaved another sigh.

"I trust they will both be very happy," said Gertrude.

"It may be so," said Mrs Black coldly; "but it

will be but a waiff kind of happiness—very different from her two sisters', who want for nothing, and both keep their own carriages—but I must always think her family are little obliged to Mr Lyndsay."

Anne's entrance put a stop to her mother's lamentations, and Gertrude was then strictly questioned as to all she had seen or heard of Mrs Larkins, who, Mrs Black seemed to think, must, from her own account, be a very distinguished personage in London. Lady Rossville made no attempts to undeceive her, but gave as flattering a picture as she could of the Larkinses' prosperity.

Upon hearing that her cousin was going to walk to Barnford to visit her aunts, the Countess offered her a seat in her barouche, which she willingly accepted of. While Anne went to get ready, Mrs Black again returned to the charge, and again expressed her own and Mr Black's gratitude for the friendly part she had acted in refusing the kirk. "As for this marriage," said she, "I have no heart to make any ploy of it, so I shall ask nobody. The lads may come out to it if they like, but I'm very doubtful if the Major and his lady will countenance it."

Gertrude was upon the point of offering to attend, but just then Anne returned, and they set off. No sooner were they alone than Anne began to repeat her acknowledgments for what had been done. "Had it not been for Mr Lyndsay," said she, "I know not what would have become of us, for my mother had resolved upon sending me to London to live with my sister, in hopes that a change might have been wrought in my sentiments; but it would have served no purpose but to render us both unhappy, for the love that is founded in religion and virtue cannot change."

"No," said Gertrude; "I do not think the love could have been true that any circumstances could ever change."

"It is perhaps sometimes difficult to distinguish false from true," said Anne; "but I am sure whoever Mr Lyndsay loves he will love truly, and whoever loves him will love for ever and aye."

"He has made a warm advocate in you," said Lady Rossville, smiling.

"Ah, he deserves much more than I can say of him! Had you but seen with what warmth and kindness he entered into our affairs, and how feelingly he sympathised in our disappointment, and how vexed he seemed upon your account too——"

"Upon my account!" exclaimed Gertrude, while a glow of conscious shame suffused her cheek.—"How!—what could he say for me?"

"He did not say much; but when my father and mother argued from your having otherwise disposed of the church that you were opposed to our union, he disclaimed that idea altogether, and said, that although you had inadvertently made an engagement which you thought you could not break, yet he was sure you suffered more than any of us did; and he said it in a way that showed how much he felt for you."

"It is in sorrow then, and not in anger, that he thinks of me!" thought Gertrude; but there was something more humiliating in the one than the other. She could have made overtures to be reconciled, but she could not sue to be forgiven; and she sought to steel herself against the repentance that her cousin's recital had awakened in her breast.

As Anne was about to renew the grateful theme, the Countess abruptly changed the conversation; and as they were then in sight of uncle Adam's mansion, she proposed to pay him a visit, to which Anne timidly assented, not having had the courage to encounter him since her marriage had been made known to him.

They were received, as usual, in a very doubtful sort

of way by Mr Ramsay. Gertrude's looks commonly softened his asperities by recalling the image of his Lizzie; and it was so long since he had seen her, that he would have almost hailed her appearance, had not the rumour of her engagement with Colonel Delmour reached his ears, and caused them to tingle to the very drums with indignation. She looked pale, and out of spirits too, and less like Lizzie than usual; so that he was ready to take the field against her, especially as he saw she had got a new and still more fashionable equipage, and her dress was something he was not accustomed to see pass his windows every day.

"I canna say London has improved you," said he, scarcely looking at her. "I dinna think I wad hae kent you if I had met you. If that's a' you have made by it, I think you would have been just as weel at hame."

"Much better, I believe," said Lady Rossville, with a sigh she did not intend. "London is not the place for either light heads or light purses like mine."

Uncle Adam thought this savoured of an attack upon his hoards, and he resented it accordingly.—"Ay, light heads mak light purses, and it's best they should keep company wi' ane anither."

Lady Rossville only smiled at this rebuff; then said, "Well, as you don't seem to make my light head and my light purse very welcome, here is a light heart that I hope will please you better,"—pointing to Anne, whose happy, blooming face, and little simply dressed figure, formed quite a contrast to the Countess's pale complexion, dissatisfied expression, and elegant but fanciful style of dress.

"Oo ay, sweet hearts are aye light hearts; but maybe that's ower light a word for you and your dominie. I dinna ken what you religious folk ca' yoursels. Hae ye ony godly name that you carry on your courtships wi'?"

Poor Anne blushed, as she answered, in some confusion, that her uncle might call her what he pleased.

"And if I should ca' you twa great fules?" demanded he.

"Perhaps you will only call us by our right names," said Anne, with a smile.

"There's some modesty at least in that," said uncle Adam, more benignly; "but what did you mean by carrying on this hiddlin' coortship c' yours sae lang? I never heard a word o't till I heard it frae your father last week."

"I thought it unnecessary to trouble you upon a subject which did not interest you," said Anne.

"How did you ken whether it would interest me or no? I suppose if I had had a kirk in my gift, you wad hae thought it very interestin'." Then, as his attention was attracted to the carriage moving forward, "That's a fine ootset for a minister's wife, or else no, to be riding up and down the country in a phyeton and fower, and her twa flunkies!"—But at that moment the Waddell carriage took the place of the Rossville one, and Mrs Major herself appeared in all her pomp and bustle.—"This is very hard," muttered Mr Ramsay, as he turned to and fro, "that I canna ca' my hoose my ain."

But Mrs Major now entered in a very slow, solemn, interesting manner; and, as if much fatigued by the exertion of walking from her carriage to the house, she seated herself immediately on her entrance, and then held out her hand, first to uncle Adam, who would not take it; next to Lady Rossville, with an affectionate shake; and, lastly, to Anne, whom she scarcely touched.

"This is the second time I have been out," said she, speaking in a languid affected tone, and applying a smelling-bottle to her nose; "and I feel quite fatigued with the exertion of walking from the carriage here."

"I am sorry to hear you have been unwell," said Lady Rossville; "nothing serious, I hope?"

"Good gracious, Lady Rossville!" exclaimed Mrs Waddell, roused into energy, "have you forgot that I have been confined?"

"O—I—I beg pardon," said Gertrude, as some confused notion darted across her brain of having heard of some such event when in London.

"The Major announced it to Mrs St Clair, I know," said the lady.

"Yes—very true—I had forgot, but I——"

"And you must have seen it in the papers—I know the Major sent it to all the papers."

"He had very little to do," observed uncle Adam.

"What paper do you get?" demanded Mrs Major, determined to dive to the bottom of this mystery.

"I seldom read any but the Morning Post."

"And was it not there?"

"Perhaps — very likely — I dare say it was — but——"

"You know, if it had been there you must have seen it, and it wasn't a thing to overlook. I must let the Major know that, and have it inquired into. I know he sent it to every one of the papers—I know that perfectly."

Lady Rossville now thought she recollected Mrs St Clair mentioning an heir to the race of Waddells; and, by way of atoning for her lapse, she said, "I hope your little boy is quite well?"

"Boy!" exclaimed the still more exasperated lady; "it happens to be a girl! and, I assure you, the Major and I were much better pleased—we were both very anxious for a girl; for although, where there is a title in the family, it is natural to wish for a son, yet we both think it is of the greatest consequence the eldest should

be a girl, so it was a great gratification to us—it was just what we wanted."

"Very true—I beg your pardon."

But the outraged mother turned towards Mr Ramsay —"I am come, uncle, to make a request in the name of my little miss, who we must really think of having christened some of these days. As the Major is an Episcopalian, we will, of course, have it done according to that service, and we hope you will kindly officiate as godfather upon the occasion."

At this proposal uncle Adam looked "black as night, fierce as ten furies;" and he seemed on the point of uttering some awful anathema, when, suddenly checking himself, he said, in one of his alarmingly mild tones, "I've nae great objections—provided I'm to hae the bairn called after me."

Mrs Waddell was confounded. On the one hand, that was all but declaring the child his heir; on the other, Adam Waddell was rather an uncouth appellation for a young lady. But then a moveable tail might be tacked to Adam;—she might be Adam to him, and Adamine or Adamella, or Adamintha, to the rest of the world; and Mrs Major inwardly chuckled at the proposal, though she resolved, at the same time, to enhance the value of the concession. She therefore said —"Why, to tell you the truth, uncle, I had fixed in my own mind to have our little miss called after the Major, although he declares she must be named after me; but I think Andromache is such a beautiful name, and so off the common——"

"Andrew Mackaye's a very gude name for her, to be sure," said uncle Adam gravely.

"Good gracious, uncle! such a way of pronouncing Andromache! However, I shall give up all thoughts of that, since you are so anxious to have our missy named after you——"

"Weel," said uncle Adam, with a savage smile—"that's a' settled, for you'll no object to a bit trifling addition to the name, for it's rather short and pookit—isna't?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, I think it is, and an addition would certainly be an improvement—Adamintha, for instance?"

"I like a name that has some meaning in't, and the name that ye're to ca' your bairn after me maun be Adamant; for I can tell baith you and her that Adamant you'll find me to the last generation o' you."

The natural man here broke out, and Adam was himself again.

"Really, uncle, you have the oddest ways," began the lady, affecting to laugh, in order to cover her confusion; "so we shall say no more about it at present. I shall leave it to the Major and you to settle it; and," addressing Lady Rossville, "when it does take place, we hope, cousin, you will be one of the godmothers, and favour us with your company on the occasion—and, I flatter myself, your god-daughter will not discredit you. Dr Bambleton says she is, without exception, the largest and finest child he ever beheld, and just her father's picture."

Lady Rossville bowed; then rose to take her leave, and motioned Anne to accompany her.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs Waddell, "is it possible, Anne, that you are flaunting about in a fine open carriage? I had no idea you would have done any thing so dissipated—what will the synod say to that?" in an affected whisper.

Anne was too meek to retort, but uncle Adam was always ready to take up the cudgels for the oppressed.

"Are you no satisfied wi' ha'in a chaise o' your ain, but you maun envye your sister, puir thing! a ride in other folk's?"

"Envy!" repeated Mrs Major, with a toss; "I'm sure I don't know what I should envy her or any one else for. As for four horses, I could have them whenever I choose, but I greatly prefer a pair; so what I have to envy I'm sure I don't know"—with an affected laugh of contempt.

"It's a pity you should be at a loss for something to rack your envye upon," said uncle Adam, as he opened his little old bureau, and took out the identical £500 bill he had received from Lady Rossville, and which had lain there ever since. "Hae, my dear," to Anne, "there's something for you to begin the world wi'—see what it is."

Anne looked at the bill, and was too much overwhelmed to be able to speak; but the glow that overspread her face, and the tears of joy that stood in her soft blue eyes, spoke volumes. Uncle Adam saw her vainly attempting to thank him, and, patting her on the shoulder, said, "You needna fash to say ony thing about it, so gang your ways.—Hae you a pocket to pit it in?" and he almost thrust her out at the door.

Mrs Waddell was now past speaking. She was to have waited for the Major, whom she had permitted to go to a meeting in the County Hall, but to wait was impossible. She instantly drove off, and called the Major away from his business to attend to her injuries, and consult whether it would not be possible to *cognosce* uncle Adam, and get the editor of the Morning Post put in the pillory.

So much time had been spent at Bellevue and uncle Adam's, that Lady Rossville found she had little to bestow upon her aunts. She had pleasure, however, in seeing them, and in seeing that in many things she had contributed to their enjoyment. Their rooms were filled with the choicest flowers and plants from Rossville. Some beautiful scriptural engravings, which she

had sent them, decorated their walls ; and she had filled an empty space at one end of the room with a pretty bookcase filled with well-chosen books. All these things her auuts were at pains to point out to her, and to tell her what pleasure her kind considerate gifts had afforded them. She pressed them to come to Rossville for a few days, while her mother and she were quite alone, for even Lady Betty was absent on a visit ; but Aunt Mary was too much of an invalid to leave home, and her sister never quitted her ; so, with many thanks, the kind offer was declined, and they parted still more favourably impressed with each other.

——o——

Chapter xc.

This is the state of man: in prosperous fortune
A shadow passing light throws to the ground
Joy's baseless fabric ; in adversity
Comes malice with a sponge moisten'd in gall,
And wipes each beauteous character away.

ÆSCHYLUS.

THE weather had now set in wet—every thing without was cheerless, within was dull ; and, surrounded with all that wealth and luxury could furnish, Lady Rossville felt that neither could protect their possessors against weariness and satiety. Delmour had taught her to despise the society of the neighbourhood, and since her return she had kept rather aloof from any intercourse ; but she would now have been glad of any one to break the tedium of the maternal *tête-à-tête*. Her reading—her music—her drawing—her embroidery—were all tried, and all failed to interest or amuse ; for her ardent but ill-regulated mind sought in every occupation, not the medicine to cure, but the ali-

ment to feed her distempered fancy. Delmour voluntarily absent from her, was the idea that haunted her day and night. To look at his picture—to shed tears over it—to begin letters of reproach only to be torn—to think of whether she ought ever to see him again—were the chief resources against the weariness of existence.

The third day of incessant rain was drawing to a close. The mother and daughter were together in the saloon, when the Countess rose and opened a window, for the fifth time within the last hour, to see whether the rain was not abating; but it fell thicker than ever—every thing was dripping, but there was not a breath of wind to relieve the surcharged trees of their moisture—no living thing to be seen, except now and then a bird, which shot silently past—not a sound was to be heard, except the sullen roar of the river, as it was urged along beyond its natural course.

Lady Rossville in despair was about to shut the window, when, dimly discernible through the mist and rain, she descried a carriage approaching.

"It is Delmour, after all," thought she, with a throb of delight—"he has meant to take me by surprise!" and all sadness and ennui fled at that idea.

"Mamma—it is—he is—there is a carriage," cried she, in all the flutter of joy, as a hack chaise-and-four, with one gentleman inside, wheeled rapidly round to the entrance, and was lost to sight.

In a second the door was thrown open—no name was announced; but, preceded by the groom of the chambers, there entered—Lewiston!

At sight of him Gertrude stood immoveable; while Mrs St Clair, uttering a shriek, clapped her hands before her eyes, as if to shut out the dreadful apparition. He only smiled at this salutation, and, approaching the Countess, held out his hand to her with the freedom of

an old acquaintance; but her cheeks glowed with indignation while she turned from him with an air of lofty disdain. He looked at her for a moment with an expression half menacing, half ironical; then turned to Mrs St Clair, who, trembling and convulsed, rested her head upon a table, as if not daring to look up.

"This intrusion is too much," said the Countess, as she moved towards the bell; but in passing her mother caught her gown with almost frantic energy, and, without raising her head, exclaimed, in a low gasping tone, "Gertrude — Gertrude — have mercy upon me!" Then, making a violent effort, she rose and tottered, rather than walked, a few steps towards Lewiston, and extending her hands, tried to welcome him; but her face was ghastly, and the words died upon her lips.

"Why, what is all this?" said he in his usual tone of familiar assurance, as he took her hands in his.—"You look as though you had seen a ghost, my good lady, instead of an old friend—but don't be afear'd—I am not from the other world, only from the right side of this one, a rovin' here and there, with my honest Trudge here," patting a great sneaking lurcher, which stuck to him like a burr;—and he laughed.

"Pardon me," said Mrs St Clair; "but the surprise—I believed you—I——" But her lips seemed parched, and her tongue as though it clove to the roof of her mouth—she could not proceed.

"It must be apparent to you, sir," said Lady Rossville, haughtily, while yet her heart trembled within her—"that your presence was unlooked for—is unwelcome," added she, as, even while she spoke, he seated himself, and smiled saucily.

Her indignation got the better of her fear.

"I know not who you are," said she, again approaching the bell—"and I receive no visitors who are unknown to me."

Again Mrs St Clair caught her — "Gertrude—dearest Gertrude, be quiet—all will be well!"

"The Countess was a goin' to order her servants to show me to the door, was she?" demanded Lewiston, in the same insulting tone of irony;—"but her ladyship may spare herself the trouble—I have paid off the chaise—this will be my home for some pretty considerable time, won't it?" to Mrs St Clair.

Lady Rossville disengaged herself from her mother, and rang the bell with violence.

"Gertrude, will you destroy me?" exclaimed Mrs St Clair, in a voice of agony that thrilled to her daughter's heart, and made her pause. When the summons was answered, "Nothing—nothing, Thompson," cried Mrs St Clair eagerly to the servant; "shut the door—that's all."

Gertrude's face was in a glow with the emotions that struggled in her breast. To be thus braved in her own house—her resentment mocked—her power, as it were, annihilated—her mother trembling before a menial, or at least one whom she herself only recognised as the husband of a menial—her brain felt as on fire, and she stood speechless from excess of agitation.

"So you thought, I s'pose, I had gone to Davy's Locker?" said Lewiston, addressing Mrs St Clair. "I read the account of the shipwreck of the Dauntless—by-the-bye, it was in the same paper with the old squire's death, for these things are sometimes a long while of reaching us on t'other side the Atlantic—so, when I saw how the land lay, thinks I, 'tis time I was off to pay my respects to the Countess. She hasn't given me a very kind reception though. But wasn't it a luckiness that I had changed my ship? Some poor devil of a Jack Lapslie it was, I think, was in a hurry to be off, and I gave up my berth to him, and waited for the next, the Hebe—wasn't I good-natured? But I *am* very

good-natured, and vartue, you know, is always its own reward—eh?"

"If such are your friends," said Lady Rossville, addressing her mother, in a voice almost inarticulate, "this house is no longer a residence for me;" and again ringing the bell, which was instantly answered (probably from Mr Thompson having stationed himself outside the door), she desired her carriage to be got ready immediately; then rushing past the servant, she flew to her own apartment. There her exasperated spirit gave way to tears, and she wept in uncontrollable agony. In a few minutes she was followed by Mrs St Clair; but on her entrance Gertrude turned away her head from her, as if determined to listen to nothing she could say.

"Gertrude!" said her mother, in a deep and agitated voice; but she made no answer.

"Gertrude!" cried she again, as she would have taken her hand; but the Countess withdrew it.

"Gertrude!" repeated she, and she sank on her knees at her daughter's feet.

Lady Rossville started up in horror; but her mother clung to her gown.

"Do not turn from me," cried she wildly;—"but tell me can I do more to soften you?—On my knees I beg of you to have mercy upon me!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Gertrude, with a shudder, as she sought to raise her mother.

"No—I have to beg for my life—for my fame—at your hands——"

"This is too dreadful!" exclaimed the Countess. —"If you would not drive me to distraction, rise."

"Will you then hear me?"

"I will—I will—anything but this."

Mrs St Clair rose.—"Gertrude, you may bring me yet lower than you have now seen me—you may bring

me to my grave.—Oh that I were already there!" cried she, with a burst of tears.

"Tell me—only tell me—the meaning of this horrid mystery," said Gertrude, trying to speak calmly;—"tell me why that man dares to treat me as he does?"

"Oh do not—in mercy to yourself and me do not ask me——"

Lady Rossville stood for some moments with her eyes bent upon the ground, while her colour gradually rose till her very brow was crimsoned; then, in a voice of assumed calmness, which only spoke repressed agony, she said, speaking slowly—

"Am I the daughter of Thomas St Clair?" Then, raising her clasped hands to her forehead, she pressed them upon it, as if to still the throbbings of her brain.

Mrs Clair looked upon her with a wild and ghastly stare—her very lips turned white, and she seemed as if bereft of all power of reply; but by a sudden revulsion the blood flew to her face, and she said in a tone of bitterness—

"Even this humiliation I will endure—as I hope to be saved, I was ever a true and faithful wife—so judge me, Heaven!" There was a fervour and solemnity in the appeal which carried conviction.

Lady Rossville uncovered her eyes, and fetched her breath; and a pause ensued, which, after some minutes, Mrs St Clair gathered courage to break—

"It is in vain that you would seek to penetrate the mysterious tie which links my fate with that of Lewiston, and which extends even to you—and it will be no less vain to attempt to free yourself from his power.—Hear me, Gertrude—hear me!—you promised you would.—If it were *possible*, if it were in human endeavour, can you for a moment imagine that I would submit to what you have witnessed?" and tears of passion dropt from her eyes.

"Still less can I imagine any cause which can make you submit to it," said the Countess; "and it is impossible that I should—I will not—I cannot do it, be the consequences what they may."

At that moment her maid entered, to say her ladyship's carriage was waiting, and while she spoke the rain fell like a water-spout.

"That is enough—let it wait," said her mistress, who, in the tumult of her mind, forgot all feelings of humanity for man or beast. The abigail withdrew, to agree with Mr Thompson that something strange was certainly going on, but what they could not divine —the gentleman in the saloon had ordered up some luncheon for himself, and was eating and drinking to his heart's content, while the ladies were above stairs all in tears. "'Twas strange, 'twas passing strange!"

No sooner was this interruption over, than Mrs St Clair exclaimed, "Go—go then—but I will also go —not in my carriage, attended as you are, but even as I am, on foot and alone,—a wretched, homeless outcast.—Yes—it is no idle threat—I here solemnly swear, that if you this day leave your house, I, too, leave it —*never* to return!"

It required no very high feelings of filial duty to turn with horror from such an alternative, aggravated as it was by every circumstance which could give effect to the picture—her mother but lately recovered from a severe illness, and yet far from well, driven from her daughter's house—exposed to the inclemency of the weather—it was too dreadful to be dwelt upon. Lady Rossville felt as though her senses would forsake her; and she said, in a vacant dejected manner, "Do what you will." Mrs St Clair seized her daughter's hands, and pressed them repeatedly to her lips, calling her at the same time by every endearing epithet; but

Gertrude sat in passive endurance, and as if scarcely conscious of the caresses lavished upon her. Her mother then rung for her maid to dismiss the carriage, and ordered her to bring some drops from her dressing-room for the Countess, who had been overcome, she said, at sight of an old friend of her father's; and having both administered and partaken of them, she saw her laid upon a couch to rest, and, leaving her in charge of Masham, she returned to the saloon to her guest.

——o——

Chapter xcj.

. . . . But that shall gall thee most,
Will be the worthless and vile company
With whom thou must be thrown into these straits.
DANTE.

O doux momens d'horreur empoisonnés!
ALZIRE.

THE hour of dinner came; and when Mrs St Clair returned to her daughter's dressing-room, she found her as she had left her, extended upon a couch, and deaf to all Miss Masham's hints of dressing. Mrs St Clair dismissed the maid, and then, in a soothing voice, said, "Gertrude, my dearest, you will come to dinner—I have had a long conversation with Lewiston — he has promised not to offend you with the bluntness of his American manners; but you ought to make allowance for them—he is an independent citizen of a republican state, where all, you know, is liberty and equality—but he means no offence, and will endeavour to adapt himself more to our notions of propriety while he remains, which I expect will be for a very short time."

"While he remains I shall keep my own apartment," said Gertrude, without raising her head.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mrs St Clair, in agitation; "he will never consent—that is, I cannot consent—dearest Gertrude, if you would not have me on my knees again, rise and come with me."

Lady Rossville sighed heavily, and rose.

"You will suffer Masham, my love, to dress you——"

"No—I will not be dressed to-day," said the Countess in an absolute manner.

"At least you will have your hair arranged a little, my love?"

"I will go as I am," said Lady Rossville, in the same self-willed tone, "or not at all."

Mrs St Clair saw it would not do to contend; she gave up the point, and, accompanied by her daughter, descended to the dining-room.

Lady Rossville's appearance certainly was not in unison with the pomp, and order, and high-keeping of every thing that surrounded her; she still wore her morning dress — her hair was dishevelled—the cheek on which she had rested was of a crimson hue, while the other was of a deadly pale; and though she passed on with an even loftier mien than usual, it was with an abstracted air, and without once lifting her eyes from the ground.

"I hope your ladyship feels recruited," said Lewiston, as she took her place at table. He evidently meant to be polite, but there was something in the tone that grated on her ear.—She started at the sound of his voice, and a faint flush overspread her whole face, as she slightly bent her head in reply.

"I found the Countess fast asleep when I went to her," said Mrs St Clair, quickly, as if answering for her daughter; "but she has not slept away that vile headache, it seems; however, we are such a little quiet party, that I persuaded her to appear.—We shall not

expect you to talk, my love, but do eat something—the soup is very good—I think Brumeau has even surpassed himself to-day."

"You keep a French cook?" demanded Lewiston; "that's a confounded expense, is it not?"

"Not for Lady Rossville," said Mrs St Clair, with a blush at the vulgarity of her friend, as she saw a sneer on the faces even of the well-bred gentlemen of the second table.

"Ah, but there are better ways and worse of spending money; however, another plateful of it, if you please, my lady—you may give me two spoonfuls—there—that's it—now, will you do me the favour to drink a glass of wine?"

"The Countess is so poor a wine drinker," again interposed Mrs St Clair, "that you had better accept of me as her substitute."

"Come—we shall all drink together—come, my lady, take a glass to drive away the blue devils this bad day—your good health and better spirits, my lady."

Gertrude's agony was scarcely endurable; but she still sat immoveable, with her eyes bent upon her plate, though without even attempting to taste what Mrs St Clair had put upon it.

"What have we got here?" said Lewiston, as he uncovered one of the dishes, and looked at it as at something he had never seen before.

"*Blanquette de poularde*, sir," said the maître d'hotel.

"Blankate day pollard!" repeated he; "shall I help your ladyship to some of them?—come, let me persuade you."

Gertrude with difficulty made out a "No—thank you;" but Mrs Clair was ready, as usual, to atone for her deficiencies.

"You seldom eat, I think, my love, till the second course. I hope there is something coming that you

like. What was it you liked so much t'other day—do you remember?"

"I don't know," said the Countess, with a sigh, and an absent look.

"Jourdain, you ought to observe what Lady Rossville likes.—How stupid, that I can't think what it was you said was so good—was it *perdreau sauté au truffes?*"

"Perhaps—I can't tell," said Lady Rossville, with an air that showed she was rather oppressed than gratified with this show of attention.

Meanwhile Lewiston was eating and drinking with all the ardour of a hungry man, and the manners of a vulgar one.—He tasted of everything, evidently from curiosity; and, though it was apparent that the style was something he had not been accustomed to, yet he maintained the same forward ease, as though he were quite at home.

"Well, that may do for once," said he, after having finished; "but, in America, we should scarcely call this a dinner—eh, Trudge?" to his dog. "Why, another such as myself would have looked silly here —I like to see a good joint or two."

Mrs St Clair tried to laugh, but she coloured again, as she said—"Lady Rossville and I make such poor figures by ourselves at anything of a substantial repast, that our dinners have, indeed, dwindled away into very fairy-like entertainments; but, Jourdain, you will remember to let us have something more solid to-morrow."

"What do you think, for instance, of a fine, jolly, juicy, thirty pound round of well-corned beef and parsnips; or a handsum leg of pork and pease-pudding, and a couple of fat geese, well stuffed with sage and onions, swimming in apple-sauce?—Ah! these are the dishes for me!" and he rubbed his hands with horrid glee.

It was a relief when dinner was over, and the servants had withdrawn; for although the degradation was not lessened, at least there was no one to witness it, unless it were the portraits of the Rossville family, as they frowned from their frames on the rude plebeian who seemed thus to have usurped their place. Gertrude had wrought herself up to a pitch of forbearance which it required all her powers of mind to maintain—a thousand times she was on the point of giving way to her feelings and ending this hateful scene; but as she caught her mother's eye fixed on her with a look of imploring agony she checked herself—"No," thought she, "I will bear all for this night; but worlds shall not tempt me to submit to such another;" and she sat in a sort of marble endurance, while yet every nerve and fibre were stretched as upon a rack. Like all vulgar people Lewiston told so many good stories of and about himself, and talked so very loud, and laughed so very heartily, reason or none, that he completely deadened every other sound. A slight commotion in the hall, caused by an arrival, had not therefore been heard by any of the party; when suddenly a servant entered, and approaching the Countess, said, "Colonel Delmour, your ladyship;" and scarcely had he spoken, when Delmour himself advanced with eager step. Gertrude rose to welcome him with a rush of delight, which, for the moment, absorbed every other consideration. But the first rapturous emotion over, it was instantly succeeded by the painful consciousness of the strange and unaccountable situation in which he found her.

"Mr Lewiston,—Colonel Delmour," said Mrs St Clair, in almost breathless agitation; "a friend of the family," added she, as she marked the haughty condescending bow with which Delmour acknowledged the introduction. But before Lewiston had opened his lips, his assumed overdone air of nonchalance—his vulgar

but confident deportment—the very cut of his clothes—all at a single glance betrayed to Colonel Delmour's practised eye and refined tact that this friend of the family was no gentleman. There was something so commanding in his own presence, such a decided air of superiority about him, that even the American, coarse and blunt as he was in feeling and perception, seemed for the moment overawed, or, at least, was silenced. Gertrude began to breathe, as she thought her lover had come to deliver her from the hateful bondage in which she was held by this man and her mother, who were both, in the jockey phrase, evidently *thrown out* by his arrival. It was not till he saw the Countess seated at table that Delmour was struck with her appearance, as contrasted with all around her: she, who was always so gay and splendid in her evening dress, was now in a morning *déshabille;* her hair was beautiful even in disorder, but still it *was* in disorder; and although nothing could bereave her of her loveliness and her grace, yet she looked ill, and was embarrassed, and altogether unlike herself.

"You have been ill, Gertrude," said Delmour, in a low voice, and speaking in Italian, while he gazed upon her with looks of the deepest interest.

"No—nothing—only since the morning," answered she.

"And what has happened since the morning?" inquired he, still speaking in the same language, while he turned a quick glance upon the stranger.

"Of all them there pickters," said Lewiston, throwing himself back in his chair, as he pointed to the family portraits, "which do you reckon would fetch most money?"

Mrs St Clair's face crimsoned while she replied she was no judge of pictures, and Gertrude already wished Delmour had not come. She could not answer his

question ; but, scarcely knowing what she said, she asked whether he had dined.

"Yes—I was detained at Darleton for want of horses, and was obliged to have recourse to a greasy mutton-chop, and a bottle of bad port, by way of pastime—and after all I could only get one wretched pair, who——"

"I had the advantage of you there, sir," said the American, rudely interrupting him ; "I had four horses from Darleton ;—by gosh ! how one does go with four horses ! " and he chucked and made a gesture as though he were driving.

This was too much—Lady Rossville started up, and, forgetting all her mother's cautions, said to Delmour, "Since you have dined there is no occasion to remain here ; " and taking his offered arm, she led the way to the drawing-room, leaving Mrs St Clair and Lewiston confounded at her temerity ; but as they passed on Mrs St Clair's voice was heard in accents of entreaty to her guest.

"In the name of Heaven, what does all this mean ? " said Colonel Delmour, when the Countess and he were alone. But pride, shame, indignation checked Gertrude's utterance, and she could not answer.

"Something is wrong—tell me what it is—who is that man ? "

Gertrude tried to repress her feelings while she answered—"He is an American."

"That may be—but certainly not an American gentleman."

"He is an old acquaintance of my father's, it seems."

"Then you have seen him before ? "

"Yes—but he only arrived to-day, and, I trust, will depart to-morrow ; it is unfortunate that you should have come at the very time when we are encumbered with such a guest."

"You don't think I have come too soon, I hope?" said Delmour, with a smile.

"Sooner certainly than I had reason to expect you," said Gertrude, roused to recollection of the slight put upon her by her lover,—"considering what interesting pursuits you were engaged in."

Delmour coloured slightly, and in some confusion said—

"So you really were taken in by excuses, lame as they were? The fact was, I was rather unwell at the time I wrote, and not caring to say so to you, I wrote—I forget what—something about a fishing party with Arabin, was it not?"

"No matter what it was," cried Gertrude, "since it was not so—though I would rather you had told me the truth at once." But the fact was even so as he had first stated it; but, whether he had taken the alarm at receiving no letter from the Countess, or that he had tired of his company, or that some sudden freak had seized him, he suddenly left his party, and set off by himself for Rossville, leaving them to follow at their own time. Gertrude's heart felt lightened of half its load. Delmour loved her as much as ever, and he was there to protect her—what had she to fear? and again her sanguine buoyant spirit danced in her heart, and sparkled in her eyes.

"Well, you will endure this odious American for to-night," said she, "and to-morrow will surely rid us of him; but he is so rude and overbearing in his manners, that I fear you will scarcely be able to tolerate him: promise me, then, that you won't notice him—I am so afraid of your quarrelling."

"Quarrelling!" repeated Delmour, with a smile of contempt; "no, I expect to be much amused with him—but as for quarrelling with such a person——"

"O! he is not a person to be amused with," said

Gertrude, in alarm; "he is coarse and violent, and must not be provoked.—Do not, for Heaven's sake, attempt to make game of him!"

"What has brought such a person here?"

"I cannot tell—but promise me that you will, for this night, bear with him such as he is?"

Delmour promised—but smiled, at the same time, at the importance she attached to so insignificant a being. Nothing more was said; for just then Mrs St Clair entered, with traces of agitation still visible on her countenance. Gertrude expected that her mother would have taken notice of her abrupt retreat from the dining-room, but she did not speak; she seated herself with assumed calmness, and began stringing some pearls belonging to one of her bracelets—but her hand shook, and her thoughts were evidently otherwise employed. In a few minutes she rose and rang the bell—when it was answered, "Have you got the segars for Mr Lewiston?" inquired she of the servant.

"I do not know, ma'am," replied Mr Thompson, whose business it was to adjust chairs, not to furnish pipes, and who seemed to resent the question by the cold pomposity of his reply.

"Inquire, then, and let me know immediately."

"So, in addition to his other agreeable qualities, Mr Lewiston is a smoker," said Lady Rossville, provoked at this pollution of her beautiful apartment. But she was sorry she had said it; for Mrs St Clair only answered with a sigh, so profound that it seemed to come from the very bottom of her heart. Some minutes elapsed, and again she rang—"Have the segars been taken to Mr Lewiston?" and she seemed relieved when an affirmative was returned.

"While Mr Lewiston is indulging his taste, then," said the Countess, "I must go and dress—the old adage of 'better late than never,' is certainly illustrative

of my case to-night;" and she turned from the mirror, ashamed, for the first time, of the image it reflected.

"And the best apology I can make for my boots," said Colonel Delmour, "is to take them off as fast as possible;" and the Countess and her lover severally retired to their toilettes.

Chapter xcij.

What he did amiss was rather through rudeness and want of judgment than any malicious meaning.—HAYWARD.

UPON returning to the drawing-room, Gertrude found her mother and Colonel Delmour seated at opposite sides of the room—he lounging over some books of engravings, she with her head resting on her hands as if buried in thought. Upon her daughter's entrance she looked up. "Have we had coffee?" inquired she, in a way which betrayed the wandering of her mind; but at that moment Lewiston came into the room, in the loud, noisy manner of an under-bred man who had taken rather too much wine, and she seemed instantly roused to recollection. She pointed to a seat on the sofa where she was sitting; but his eyes were riveted on the Countess, whom he did not at first recognise in her change of dress. When he did he exclaimed, "By Jove! I didn't know you, you're so rigged out—why what's going to be acted now? The deuce! I was almost thinking of my bed," and he yawned. Lady Rossville crimsoned; but she caught her mother's eye, and she said in a low voice to Delmour, "Take no notice;" and she began to talk earnestly to him about some of the engravings he was looking at, while Mrs St Clair said—

"We have brought London hours to the country with us, but we must make a reform."

"Ha, reform! yes, that's a very good word. I like the word reform," interrupted the American. "Reform, reform," repeated he, "yes, it's a good thing, is it not, my lady? And I will reform your fire in the first place;" and he began to stir and beat it in the most annoying manner—then threw down the poker with a horrid clang, and drawing his chair close to the fire, he put his feet actually within the fender, and rasped and crunched the ashes which he had scattered all over the hearth. Lady Rossville was on the point of rising and leaving the room, when Mrs St Clair crossed to where she was sitting, and, under pretence of looking at one of the pictures, she pressed her daughter's hand in a significant manner, while, in a low voice, and speaking very rapidly to Delmour in French, she said—

"I must beg your forbearance for American manners —you will oblige me by it."

This was the first time Mrs St Clair had ever addressed Colonel Delmour on easy or friendly terms —their intercourse hitherto had been marked either by constraint or enmity, and now, all of a sudden, she condescended to sue him. Gertrude could scarcely credit her senses, and even Delmour looked surprised, while he answered with a bow.

After sitting two or three minutes whistling, with his hands clasping one of his knees, Lewiston started up, and pushing back his chair in the same rude violent manner that marked his every action, he planted himself directly before the fire, so as to screen it from every one else. All this was excruciating to Lady Rossville and Colonel Delmour, both so elegantly quiet and refined in all their habits and movements; and they exchanged looks with each other, as much as to say, ought this to be endured?

Mrs St Clair perceived it, and hastily said—

"How shall we pass the evening? Gertrude, my dear, will you give us some music?—Mr Lewiston, are you fond of music—or should you prefer cards?"

"Quite agreeable to either, ma'am—I like a song—none of your Italian gibberish though—and have no objections to a game;—but, by-the-by my lady, can you play at draughts? that's the game for me!"

"No, sir," was the Countess's cold laconic reply.

"That's a pity—but I'll teach you—you have a draught-board surely? Ah! there's a table — still better.—Come, my lady," and he touched her arm.

Colonel Delmour looked as if he would have shot him.

"Excuse me, sir," said Lady Rossville, drawing back, and colouring with indignation.

"No, no, come away—don't be afear'd—you'll soon larn;" and again he took hold of her.

"Lady Rossville is not accustomed to be so importuned, sir," said Delmour, while his lip quivered with passion.

"Is Lady Rossville, sir, accustomed to have you for her prompter?" demanded Lewiston, sneeringly.

"Colonel Delmour—Mr Lewiston!" exclaimed Mrs St Clair, in violent agitation, "I entreat—I beg—Mr Lewiston, I shall be happy to play at draughts with you—Lady Rossville cannot play—indeed she cannot."

"So much the better—so much the better—I like to larn people their duty," added he, with an insolent smile, and looking at Colonel Delmour.

"Another time, then," said Mrs St Clair; "but, for this evening, accept of me."

"No, no, I will have my lady," said the American, with all the determination of unconquerable obstinacy.

"He is either mad or drunk!" exclaimed Delmour,

passionately, "and no company for you;" and, rising, he took Gertrude's hand to lead her away.

"No, sir, I am neither mad nor drunk, as you will find," cried Lewiston, placing himself before them; "but I have something to say——"

"Mr Lewiston!" cried Mrs St Clair, with almost a shriek, "for Heaven's sake — Gertrude — Colonel Delmour—what is all this? How childish!—Gertrude, I command you as a daughter to sit down to draughts with Mr Lewiston."

"That's it—that's right——" said Lewiston, with exultation. Lady Rossville's cheeks glowed, and tears of pride and anger stood in her eyes—she hesitated.

"You must not," said Delmour, impetuously.—"You shall not."

"For mercy's sake, obey me!" whispered her mother, in a voice of agony; and taking her hand she led her to the table.—"Sit down, my love," whispered she, "and I will play for you—Gertrude, have mercy upon me!" and she wrung her daughter's hand as the Countess would have drawn back.

"Do you submit to be so compelled?" cried Delmour, almost frantic with rage at the idea of his beautiful Countess sitting down to play at draughts with a rude low-bred unknown.

"Yes, yes," said Gertrude, moved to pity at her mother's appeal—"I will try for once;" and she seated herself, and Mrs St Clair took a chair close by her.

Lewiston, satisfied with having carried his point of getting Lady Rossville to sit down with him, allowed Mrs St Clair to play the game for her daughter. He entered into it himself with loud boyish delight—rubbed his hands—snapped his fingers—swore by Jove! and by Jingo!—and when he came to the castling or crowning, always insisted that the Countess should perform that ceremony.

"I will have all my honours from you," said he, laughing; "all—all—you shall crown me—you shall castle me—shan't she?" to Mrs St Clair, who looked the picture of wretchedness, though she strove to keep up with his intemperate mirth.

"He is certainly mad," thought Lady Rossville, and she began to feel afraid—she wished for Delmour; but Delmour, in displeasure, had left the apartment, and she heard him knocking about the billiard balls by himself in the billiard-room. Game after game was played, and won by Lewiston with unabated energy and delight, till at last Gertrude's patience could endure no longer, and she rose with an exclamation of weariness.

"Well, you have had a good lesson for one night, my lady—let us see how much it has cost you;" and he began to count over his winnings; then, putting them between his hands, he rattled them with a glee that, under other circumstances, would have been ludicrous.

"Now, give us a song, my lady, do—come, mamma," to Mrs St Clair, "exert your authority—I must have a song. Why, I haven't heard you sing yet, and I've something of a pipe myself."

"Lady Rossville has done so much for me, that I am sure she will not refuse me this request," said her mother, in an imploring manner, as she took her daughter's hand and pressed it tenderly in hers.

"I cannot sing," said Gertrude, almost choking with the conflict of her feelings.

"What's the matter? not in tune? Never mind, you'll do very well."

"The night is nearly over," said Mrs St Clair soothingly, but in a whisper, as Lewiston, tired of chucking his money, was busy transferring it to a large silk purse; "your compliance may prevent a quarrel."

"Never again will I submit to what I have this day endured!" said Gertrude, with emotion, as her mother took her arm and led her into the music-room.

"What!—you seem rather piano, my lady," said Lewiston, looking at her with a smile; "well, I'll give you a song, since you won't give me one, and one of your own Scotch ones too—I'm half a Scotchman now, you know," with a wink to Mrs St Clair; "so here's for your glorious Robert Bruce!" And he burst out with "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," in a key that made the very walls reverberate the sound. Yet, to own the truth, he had a fine, deep, clear voice, and sung well in a very vulgar style, with a great deal of gesticulation, clenching of hands, stamping of feet, and suiting of the action to the words. To that succeeded an American song, and another, and another, in rapid succession, for his lungs seemed inexhaustible; and he sung volumes of odious political songs with the same vehemence and enthusiasm, till both Mrs St Clair and Lady Rossville were ready to faint with the fatigue of listening to him. The former, indeed, encouraged him to go on by her applause, while, at the same time, she held her daughter's hand, and by her looks and gestures constrained her, in spite of herself, to remain. To add to the mortification, Delmour, attracted by the noise, had entered the room; but, with a look expressive of his indignation and contempt, had instantly quitted it.

"Now, my lady, I've done my part, haven't I?—I have a right to your song now—come, I must have it—I never gave up a point in my life—I've got a square head; and square heads as well as square toes are all obstinate; at least some people call it obstinacy—I call it firmness—and I'm firm for your song."

"This insolence is not to be borne!" exclaimed Lady Rossville, starting up, and endeavouring to wrest

her hand from her mother's grasp, that she might leave the room; but she clung to her with fear and agony in every lineament.

"Gertrude—Gertrude!—hear me but this once—this is my last attempt.—For such a trifle would you drive me to destruction?—It will come soon enough, but not now—spare me—oh! spare me now!"

"There's a pretty daughter for you, by jingo!" exclaimed Lewiston, as the Countess stood with her face averted from her mother, who still held her hands in spite of her efforts to liberate them.

Lady Rossville's passion rose. "Come what may I care not," cried she; "I command that man to leave my house."

"That's easier said than done, my lady," returned he with the most provoking coolness—"is it not, my good Trudge?" as he pulled his dog by the ear.—"But, come now, give us the song, the night's wearing on;" and he was going to have taken her arm to lead her to the instrument, when, by a sudden effort, she freed herself from her mother's grasp, and rushed into the adjoining room, where, throwing herself on a seat, she almost sobbed in the bitterness of her feelings. Lewiston's voice, loud as if in argument, and Mrs St Clair's as if in entreaty, were distinctly heard; but they added nothing to Lady Rossville's emotion. In a few minutes her mother joined her in the wildest and most violent agitation.

"Gertrude," cried she, "I no longer ask your forbearance—your mercy—I see it cannot be!" And she wrung her hands in agony.—"To-morrow must end it—Oh that the earth would cover me before to-morrow!"

Violent passion has always the effect of absorbing or annihilating all inferior degrees of excitement, and Lady Rossville was gradually composed at sight of her

mother's real despair. She would even have tried to soothe her, but at that moment Lewiston entered as if nothing had happened.

"Well, you have made a fine row," said he, addressing Gertrude—"and all for what? Because I asked you to sing a song? You must be deucedly thin-skinned, my lady, to fly off like a witch in a storm for that—you've something to larn yet, I can tell ye, and that's a fact."

"She will learn all soon enough," said Mrs St Clair, gloomily; "to-morrow—but let this night pass over——"

"Not without some supper, I hope—for your *blankates* lie very light upon me, I can tell you," and he laughed heartily at his own witticism.

Mrs St Clair rang the bell for some refreshments, eager to end this hateful evening, and, at the same time, Delmour made his appearance, with evident traces of ill-humour visible on his countenance. But she felt too happy to see him, on any terms, to resent his behaviour—there was protection—there seemed even a propriety in his presence; and her looks brightened, and her tears passed away, when he came and placed himself by her in a manner to screen Lewiston from her sight, who was on the opposite side of the room making a noise with his dog.

"You have passed a gay, and, of course, a pleasant evening," said he in a bitter ironical tone; "one of your guests, at least, has no cause to complain of lack of courtesy."

"Oh, Delmour!" said Gertrude, in a tone of wretchedness, "do not add to my unhappiness by your reproaches — it is unkind when you see me thus——" and her heart swelled almost to suffocation.

"It is degrading to you and myself to suffer this,"

cried he, passionately.—"This instant I will end it by ordering that fellow from your presence." And he made a movement towards Lewiston—Gertrude caught his arm.

"No—not now.—Suffer him for a little longer—to-morrow is to end it—if he does not leave this house to-morrow——" She stopped—a faint red tinged her cheek as she gave her hand to Delmour, and said—"You shall take me from it."

"Pray Heaven he may remain then," said Delmour, earnestly, "if upon these terms you will indeed be mine!"

Gertrude only sighed; but it was her firm determination, unless this mystery was cleared up, and Lewiston left the house, to throw herself on the protection of her guardian, Lord Millbank—and, holding herself absolved from her promise to her mother, there to have her marriage with Colonel Delmour solemnised.

On Delmour's side the suspicion was, that Mrs St Clair was privately married to Lewiston; and much as his pride revolted from such a connection, still his interest might benefit by it. Lady Rossville would instantly emancipate herself from her mother's authority, and give him a legal right to protect her; and it would be easy to get rid of the couple by agreeing to settle something upon them, provided they retired to America for life. A tray with refreshments, such as Lady Rossville and Mrs St Clair had been in the habit of taking, was now brought in; but at which the American expressed great dissatisfaction.

"Why, them here are what we give to our porkers on t'other side the water," said he, contemptuously taking up a peach—"and as for your French wines and liquors, by jingo! I wouldn't give a glass of good grog for a dozen of 'em. Hark ye, my good friend," to one of the servants, "you'll please to lay a bit of a

cloth for me ; and order your cook to send me up a good rasher of bacon, and a brace or two of eggs—a Virginian if you have him, and cut at least as thick as my finger ; and, Mr Butler, I'll trouble you for a bottle of your best Hollands—that's the thing ;—but faith I'll go down and see the porker cut myself—where does your kitchen lie ?" And away he marched.

"Let us to bed," said Mrs St Clair, in a tone of suppressed torture, and as if taking advantage of his absence to leave the room ; her daughter rose to accompany her, but she lingered behind a moment to say to Delmour—"You will not remain here I hope ?"

"No, I shall leave the butcher to use his knife upon his porker, and go to my own apartment—I pray he may make a good supper here for some nights to come," added he, with a smile.

But Lady Rossville shook her head and sighed, then followed her mother to her dressing-room.

"I will say nothing to-night," cried Mrs St Clair, as she entered,—"leave me, then—leave me."

"At least, mamma, suffer me to stay with you a little."

"Not an instant—leave me, I say," cried she impatiently. "What would you have more than my ruin and your own ?—that, I have told you, you have nearly accomplished."

"Be it so then," said Gertrude with emotion ; "there can no ruin surpass the disgrace and ignominy——"

"Peace !" exclaimed Mrs St Clair ; "you will drive me mad !" and she put her hand distractedly to her forehead.

Gertrude would have embraced her as usual at parting for the night, but she repelled her.

"To-morrow your embrace may be of some value to me—to-night it is of none—it is worse than none—I

will not have it," and she pushed her daughter from her. — "Leave me, I command you," cried she, violently; and Gertrude was obliged to obey. No sooner was she outside the door than she heard the lock turned upon her, and when Mrs St Clair's maid came she was refused admittance. Lady Rossville was terrified; and she lingered long at her mother's door, and heard her walk backwards and forwards, and groan as if in anguish; but when she tapped or spoke to her, she was instantly silent, and would make no reply. As her apartment communicated with her mother's, several times in the course of the night she rose and listened, but the same thing went on; and the morning was far advanced before, exhausted as she was, she could compose herself to sleep.

Chapter xciij.

O visions ill foreseen! Better had I
Lived ignorant of future! so had borne
My part of evil only!

MILTON.

WHEN Lady Rossville awoke, one subject naturally engrossed her mind to the utter exclusion of every other. This was the day of her cousin Anne's marriage, and she had promised to be present; but the thoughts of that never once occurred to her—every thing was absorbed in the intense interest she felt as to the disclosure that was to take place—or failing that, the strong measure which she had determined upon as to her own disposal. Upon leaving her own apartment she hastened to her mother's, but the door was still fastened—she knocked repeatedly, but no answer was returned—she listened, all was silent—her

heart trembled within her, and she was on the point of calling out, when she bethought her of a back-stair communicating with the dressing-room, by which she might probably gain access. She was not disappointed —the door was open, and she entered her mother's bed-room; but it was dark, except here and there where a bright ray of sunshine chequered the floor, and the candles, which had been burning all night, cast a sickly gleam as they died away in their sockets. Gertrude hastily withdrew a window-curtain and opened a shutter, and there discovered her mother asleep in an arm-chair, in the dress she had worn the preceding evening, and which formed an unnatural contrast with her situation and appearance.

A phial marked "laudanum" stood on a table by her; and it was evident that she owed her sleep to medicine, not to nature. Such as it was, it was certainly not rest that she enjoyed; for she was disturbed and agitated—sighed heavily, and muttered some unintelligible words, as if in an agony, and Gertrude's name was once or twice pronounced with a kind of shriek. Shocked beyond expression at beholding her mother thus haunted by her sense of wretchedness even in sleep, Lady Rossville felt it would be humanity to rouse her from such a state, and after a while she succeeded. Mrs St Clair opened her eyes; but it was some time before she came to her recollection, or that her daughter could make her comprehend perfectly how and where she was.

"I fear, mamma, you have taken too much of this hateful drug," said she, in alarm, as she looked at the bottle.

"Too much—and yet not enough," answered her mother, with a sigh.

"Allow me to send for Dr Bruce," cried the Countess, in increasing agitation—"you are ill, mamma,

indeed you are," as she pressed her mother's burning hand in hers.

"I shall soon be better," said Mrs St Clair, with a still deeper sigh.—"What time is it?—I have been asleep, I believe—shall we sup?" as she looked upon her dress with a bewildered eye.

"O, mamma, suffer yourself to be undressed, and put to bed."

"No—I will go to—to breakfast, is it?—yes, I remember now, to breakfast," as she looked up to a blazing sun; then turned to a mirror—"Will my dress do, Gertrude?"

Lady Rossville was too much shocked to reply; for the contrast was frightful between her mother's gay handsome dress and her parched lips, haggard cheeks, and distended eyeballs.

"The air will revive you, mamma," said she, as she led her mother to the window, and threw it open; but the lovely landscape seemed as though it smiled in scorn upon her, for all things looked fresh, and renovated, and happy. Mrs St Clair sat for some time with her head resting on her hand; at length she suddenly looked up, and said abruptly—"You are very fond of Rossville, are you not, Gertrude?"

"O! it is Paradise to me," said the Countess, as she looked on her towering woods and far-spreading domain; "but why do you ask, mamma?"

"Then you will never part with it?" cried Mrs St Clair, in a tone of wild interrogation.

"Never—never!" exclaimed Lady Rossville, emphatically; then recalled to her mother's situation, she said in a soothing voice, "Do, mamma, allow me to ring for Lisle to undress you—it will refresh you."

"And what then?" interrupted Mrs St Clair; "but I know what I have to do—yet I would see that man once more before—perhaps—yes—I will—ring for

Lisle then ;" and she began impatiently to tear rather than to take off her ornaments. "Now go—leave me —why do you stand there looking upon me?" cried she, angrily.

Lady Rossville burst into tears. "It is distracting to me to see you thus, mamma, and to think I am perhaps the cause——"

"Perhaps!" repeated Mrs St Clair, bitterly; "there is no perhaps—you *are* the cause."

"Only say in what way—tell me how—trust me, and I will do all——"

"All but the very thing I require of you," interrupted Mrs St Clair impatiently,—"all but obedience and forbearance—all but duty and patience—all but love and tenderness. Answer me then, once for all—'tis for the last time I put the question—its consequences be upon your own head—Can you—will you be guided by me in your behaviour to Lewiston?"

"I *cannot!*" said Lady Rossville, in an agony of grief.

"Then go," cried her mother, ringing the bell violently for her maid—"not another word—if your fate is sealed, do not blame me;" then, as her maid entered, she waved her hand for her daughter to leave her, and Gertrude withdrew, afraid to irritate her by farther opposition.

"What can this dreadful mystery be?" was the question that had naturally presented itself at every turning of her mind, till thought had been lost in the mazes of conjecture. The idea which most frequently occurred was, that her mother must have been previously married to Lewiston, and, in the belief of his death, had become the wife of St Clair. But then his youthful appearance ill accorded with such a supposition—indeed, seemed to render it altogether impossible; and again the idea was rejected for others which were

no less improbable. "Be it what it may," thought she, "this day must end it;" and at that moment, in crossing the hall, she suddenly encountered the object of her dread and her wonder. He looked heated and ruffled, and as if he had been engaged in a squabble. "So," said he, seizing her hand before she was aware, and looking earnestly in her face, which bore traces of her agitation—"so you have been with the old lady, I see!—Well, has she let the cat out of the bag, or has she left it to me?"

Some of the servants just then entered the hall, and Lady Rossville, without answering, passed on to the saloon, where she hoped to find Delmour; but he was not there. Lewiston followed, and again began—

"What! all in the dark yet?—what's the old lady about?—But, by Jove! I'll not wait another day to be treated as I have been by you and your confounded rapscallions. But I've given one of your grooms, as you call them, a settler. I've given him a bit of a knob on the side of his head, to keep him in mind of his duty—and I'll have them all broke in for you by and by; a set of lazy, insolent, eating and drinking scoundrels that you keep about you!—and one of these low-lived rascals to pretend to pass off his airs to a gentleman like me——"

"This is past all bearing!" cried Lady Rossville, as her face flushed with shame and indignation at having been thus disgraced to her servants—"I command you instantly to quit my house——" and she stretched out her hand to ring the bell. Lewiston hastily snatched it, and looked at her with an expression which made her tremble even in spite of her resentment.

"Do you know who it is you are a speakin' to?" said he.

"I neither know nor care," said Lady Rossville, while her heart beat as though it would have burst.

Lewiston was silent for a minute ; he then said abruptly, but in some agitation—

" No ?—hem—why what if I am your father ? "

Gertrude gazed upon him with a look almost bordering on idiocy—her lips were apart, but no sound came from them.

" It's a fact though—ask the old lady, her you call your mother, if it arn't—she'll confess it, that she will ! She'll tell you you're no more Countess of Rossville than I am—take it as you will, that's a fact—you're the daughter of your nurse, Marian La Motte ; and I, Jacob Ruxton Lewiston—I say—I'm your father."

Like a flash of lightning, the horrible conviction darted across Gertrude's mind for an instant. The next beheld her senseless ; and she would have fallen to the ground had not Lewiston caught her in his arms and placed her on a sofa.

" The deuce ! " exclaimed he, in some consternation at this unlooked-for result. " Why, I'd better have let the old one manage it her own way, after all ; " and, ringing the bell, he desired the servant to fetch Mrs St Clair cleverly, for that her ladyship the Countess was in a fit. The alarm was instantly communicated, and the whole house was presently in commotion.

Chapter xciv.

What ! shall such traces of my birth appear,
And I not follow them ? It may not be !

SOPHOCLES.

LONG ere Gertrude had power to unclose her eyes the frantic exclamations of her lover had pierced her ear, as he hung over her in an agony of apprehension — and joy sent the first faint blush to her

cheek, and spoke in the look with which she met his anxious gaze. For a moment all was forgot by her, or rather seemed as a hideous dream; and Delmour, kneeling by her side in all the agitation of love and fear, was the only image that presented itself.

"I hope, my lady, your ladyship feels a something better," said Lewiston, thrusting himself forward; but at the sound of his voice a deadly paleness again overspread her face, and her senses forsook her.

"Will none of you drag that madman away?" cried Delmour, passionately, to some of the servants, who were bustling pompously about with glasses and decanters.

"No—no—no," shrieked Mrs St Clair, throwing herself between Lewiston and them, as they approached him; "Marshall—Jourdain—on your peril touch him."

"Send instantly for advice," cried Delmour, wildly, as Gertrude's lifeless hand grew colder even in his grasp—"make haste—bring Bruce — Smith — all of them—why do you stand there?—By Heaven she will be gone!——" and snatching every restorative offered by the housekeeper and ladies' maids, he would administer them himself. Once more Gertrude slowly opened her eyes, and again they rested on her lover.

"It was—all—a dream—was it not?" said she, in a low gasping voice.

"Ah! our Countess is comed to herself again," cried Lewiston, in a loud significant tone, as much as to say, "Keep your own secret."

"Protect me!" murmured she, as she convulsively held Delmour's hand, and again relapsed into a death-like swoon.

"For Heaven's sake retire!" cried Mrs St Clair to Lewiston, dreading some scene of violence when Delmour should extricate himself from Gertrude's unconscious grasp—"only to the next room, till this is over.—"If," added she, in a whisper—"if you would

prevent discovery, go——" and she led him to an adjoining room, and shut the door. Once more Gertrude's marble features showed signs of returning life; but she neither spoke nor opened her eyes—she remained motionless, as if unwilling to be scared by sight or sound, or aught that could break the deathlike repose in which she lay.

"Lady Rossville—dearest——" exclaimed Mrs St Clair, as she would have lifted her hand; but when she spoke a tremor shook Gertrude's whole frame, and she recoiled from her touch with a shudder.

"Gertrude — my life! suffer Mrs Roberts and Masham to assist you to your dressing-room—you will be quieter there—no one shall enter but those you wish to see—they shall not, indeed, my angel!"

But a low convulsive sigh was Gertrude's only answer.

"Gertrude—speak to me—say what it is that has alarmed you?—tell me what you wish, and it shall be done," cried Delmour, in an accent of grief and tenderness which seemed to thrill to her heart. "Shall I order the carriage to take you to Lord Millbank's?" added he, in a low voice.

"O—no—no," cried she, putting her hands to her face.

"Colonel Delmour, I must entreat that you will not thus agitate Lady Rossville," cried Mrs St Clair; "this is neither a time nor a place for such questions; when she has had a little quiet repose in her own apartment——"

"I will not lose sight of her again," interrupted Delmour passionately, "till I see her in safer hands than any here."

"This is too much," cried Mrs St Clair, struggling to preserve her composure, and dreading every instant lest the disclosure (which she at once perceived had

taken place) should burst from Gertrude's lips, if Delmour persisted in talking to her; "but I submit—suffer her to be removed to her own apartment, with Mrs Roberts and Masham to attend upon her till this nervous attack has subsided, and I consent to remain here till the arrival of Dr Bruce."

Delmour could not object to this arrangement, for Mrs Roberts was a discreet and respectable person in her way, and both she and Masham were devoted to their lady—he therefore consented, and she was accordingly conveyed there, and left to the care of her two faithful attendants, who received the strictest injunctions upon no account to speak to her. Mrs St Clair felt secure that, unless in a fit of delirium, she would not betray herself to them; and if, in that state, she did drop any thing of the truth, it would all pass for the raving of fever. Gertrude was therefore left to silence and to darkness; while Mrs St Clair and Colonel Delmour, by a sort of mutual understanding, seemed resolved not to lose sight of each other. He, indeed, was bent upon more than that—he was determined that instant to force an explanation of the mystery which involved such a person as Lewiston (and that in no common way) in the family concerns of Lady Rossville; and, ringing the bell, he ordered the servant to inform Mr Lewiston, who was in the next room, that his presence was desired in the saloon.

At this message Mrs St Clair turned pale and trembled—she rose from her seat—she would have stopped the servant, but she knew not what to say; and before she could summon recollection Lewiston entered, and her confidence returned at sight of his free unabashed air.

"Well," said he, accosting Mrs St Clair with an air of freedom, "you see I am yours to go and to come, ma'am—but what have you made of my lady?"

"You are not here to ask questions, but to answer them, sir," said Delmour, his lip quivering with passion. "I insist upon knowing by what right you have intruded yourself into this house?"

"Perhaps it would be as well if I first know'd what right you have to ask the question," retorted the other, boldly.

"Colonel Delmour," exclaimed Mrs St Clair, eagerly, as she saw his flashing eyes, and dreading some act of violence—"Mr Lewiston is a friend of the family—he is my friend, that is enough——"

"Your friend!" repeated Delmour, contemptuously —"that is indeed enough, quite enough, to warrant Lady Rossville seeking other protection." He rang the bell furiously—"Desire Lady Rossville's travelling-carriage and my riding-horses to be ready at a minute's warning," called he to the servant.

"Hark ye, my man, there's no hurry about the first," cried the intolerable Lewiston—"we shall have two words about that yet."

But the servant, evidently disregarding him, bowed his acquiescence to Delmour, and withdrew.

"What is the meaning of all this, Colonel Delmour?" cried Mrs St Clair in the most violent agitation.

Delmour endeavoured to speak coolly, while he said—

"It was settled last night, by Lady Rossville, that while Mrs St Clair's unknown friend remained here, this was no fit residence for her.—She leaves it, therefore, for the protection of her guardian, Lord Millbank; and when Dr Bruce arrives, I intend that he shall accompany her." And he looked with the sort of resolute indifference of one whose determination could not be affected by any circumstances.

"This is the most extraordinary proceeding, Colonel

Delmour," said Mrs St Clair, pale and trembling.—"You can have no authority for such interference in my ——in Lady Rossville's situation, to take her from her own house—from my protection—it shall not be."

"No—by Jove! she shall not stir a foot from this house to-day," cried Lewiston, "nor any day, without the leave of them who have somethin' of a better right to dictate to her ladyship than you have, sir;" and he nodded to Mrs St Clair, as if to encourage her.

Delmour's passion was at its climax, and he could no longer suppress it.

"What is this infernal mystery," cried he to Mrs St Clair, "which allows such a person to dare to talk in this manner?—I will know it—something is at the bottom of all this—if——" and he seemed almost choked to utter it—"if this man is, as I suspect, your husband——"

"No—oh no!" shrieked Mrs St Clair, wildly.

"Well, and if I am the lady's husband, sir, or likely to be so, sir, what then? What is your objection to me, sir? My lady Countess's proud stomach, it seems, can't put up with me for her father—but what is that to you? You're not my lord yet, and one gentleman's as good's another, and that's a fact."

"Colonel Delmour—oh no—help me—I am not—I——" exclaimed Mrs St Clair, in a state of distraction, at finding herself caught in such horrible toils. But again Lewiston interposed.—"Come, come—'tis of no use to deny it now—the thing's over, and my lady will come to herself by and by, when she finds she can't make a better of it—there, I told you——" as a servant entered, to say that his lady wished to see Mrs St Clair immediately.

Delmour, who had been pacing the room in a perfect tumult of passion, stopt short at this, and demanded of the servant who had brought this message?

"Miss Masham, sir," was the reply.

"Then desire Miss Masham to come and deliver it herself, sir," cried he, fiercely; and Masham, not without fear and trembling, confirmed the fact. He then abruptly quitted the room to traverse the gallery opposite the Countess's apartment, and see that no one else obtained entrance.

At sight of Mrs St Clair all Gertrude's tremors returned upon her, and again she relapsed into successive fainting-fits, from which her attendants with difficulty recovered her. At length she became more composed, whether from strength or weakness, and, in a faint voice, inquired for Mrs St Clair, who, conscious of the impression she made upon the victim of her guilt, had retired out of sight.

"Mrs St Clair is there, my lady," whispered Mrs Roberts.

"Then leave me, Roberts. Masham, go—I will ring when I want you."

But they still lingered.

"Colonel Delmour, my lady, forbade that we should lose sight of your ladyship, upon no account, till the doctor's arrival."

"Colonel Delmour!" repeated Gertrude.—"Ah!"—and tears, the first she had shed, burst from her eyes; they gave her a temporary relief, and she, with some difficulty, dismissed her faithful attendants, and Mrs St Clair once more approached her. Many and bitter were the tears shed on both sides before either had power to utter a syllable. At length Mrs St Clair said—

"Can you forgive me, Gertrude?"

But Gertrude only turned away her head and wept the more—then suddenly looking up, by a violent effort she stopt her tears; and, while they yet hung round her eyes, and her pale lips quivered, she said—

"Tell me all——"

"Oh, not now—spare yourself—spare me," cried Mrs St Clair, with a fresh burst of weeping.

"No, no—there is nothing to spare—say that it is not—that he——" and again she seemed as though she would have fainted, as the thoughts of Lewiston, her father, rushed upon her.

"Oh tell me all—I must—I will know all!" And Mrs St Clair was obliged to commence a broken and weeping narrative of the events of her early days.

——o——

Chapter xcb.

. . . . . O, Light! thy beams no more
Let me behold; for I derive my birth
From those to whom my birth I should
Not owe.

SOPHOCLES.

SHE dwelt upon the injurious and exasperating treatment she had received from the Rossville family, as though she sought in their conduct an excuse, or at least a palliation, for her own. She spoke of the exile and the poverty in which she had for so many years dragged out a joyless existence—of her husband's disinheritance—of the utter hopeless insignificance of their lot, as outcast, childless annuitants, on the one hand—or the brilliant destiny which seemed to court them on the other, where riches and honours awaited them in the person of their offspring.

"It was at this time," continued the wretched narrator of her own guilt, "that accident brought me acquainted with—with Marian La Motte——"

"With my mother—was she not?" interrupted Gertrude, in a voice of repressed agony. Mrs St Clair's

only answer was a burst of tears. Gertrude hid her face on the cushion of the couch, on which she lay, and without looking up, in the same tone said, "Go on—tell me all."

"In her I discovered the daughter of Lizzie Lundie, whose name and history had been familiar to me in my younger days. She had emigrated to America with her husband, and upon his death had married a French Canadian. Marian was the child of that union; but at this time her parents were both dead, and she was the wife of Jacob Lewiston, an American trader, whom she had accompanied to Bordeaux. She was then in absolute want, for his vessel had been wrecked, and the whole cargo lost; but at the time I became acquainted with them he obtained a situation on board a merchantman, and went to sea again, leaving his wife in delicate health to earn her livelihood as she best could till his return. To complete her wretchedness, she looked forward to giving birth to a child——"

Here Mrs St Clair stopped, overcome with her feelings; then suddenly seizing Gertrude's hands—

"Gertrude! Gertrude! God knows I had then no evil thoughts! I had not, indeed; but when she besought me on her knees that if she should die a stranger in a strange land, and leave an orphan baby, I would be as a mother to it.—Oh! then the tempter assailed me!"

"Would that I had died ere I saw the light!" exclaimed Gertrude, in an agony of grief.

"Oh, Gertrude! do not tear my heart by forcing me to retrace what can be of no avail—what can it signify now to tell you of the thoughts—the fears—the struggles I endured myself—of the arguments and entreaties I used with her and my husband to induce them to co-operate in my schemes? It is enough to tell you that it was done—that we quitted Bordeaux on

pretence of returning to Scotland, and that at Bagnolet you were brought into the world as the heiress of Rossville; and such you still are, Gertrude—the secret is known but to yourself, and those who——"

"Hush!" exclaimed Gertrude, wildly, and with a shudder.

"There cannot be the possibility of discovery if you will but——"

"You have not told me all," cried Gertrude, hurriedly.

"Gertrude, I will not survive the shame — the infamy——"

"Tell me all—all quickly.—Why did he leave her?—Why has he so long—it is about him," gasped she, "I would know?"

"From the day that he left her his wife never heard any tidings of him, and we at least naturally concluded he had perished at sea. Still there was no positive certainty of this being the case, and she always cherished the hope of seeing him again; for she loved him, Gertrude—indeed she did." But Gertrude only wept the more, to think that she could not love her father.

"Your mother—Oh, Gertrude! how dreadful it is to me to call another by that title!" And again Mrs St Clair wept long and bitterly; then went on—"Your mother had been long threatened with a consumption, and when she found herself dying she had, it seems, unknown to me, written a letter containing the secret of your birth, which she had attested by her priest (for you know she was a Catholic); this she confided to his care, receiving his solemn promise, in return, never to divulge its contents, or part with it to another than Jacob Ruxton Lewiston, of Perth-Amboy, New Jersey."

"Years after this man went to America as a missionary; and there, alas! it was our evil fortune that he should find your father!—I need not tell you that

he came immediately to Britain to claim you.—You must well remember our first meeting, and the mysterious interviews that followed. He would even then have made himself known to you, that he might have established his authority over you; but I prevailed upon him to forego his claims, at least till the Earl's death.—Oh! had he known you as I do, he would never have dared the disclosure; but you will not, Gertrude—you cannot be so infatuated!—he is your father,—as such he is entitled to your duty, your obedience——"

"Now—now—no more," cried Gertrude, covering her face with her hands.

"Gertrude, only say you will not be so mad—for Heaven's sake, promise me you will not!—Gertrude, he threatens to carry you off to America, should you drop a hint of——Oh! for the love of Heaven, be calm!—think of your mother. You loved her, Gertrude, for her sake then——"

"My mother!—how could she sell her child!" exclaimed Gertrude, wringing her hands in an agony.

"She did not sell you, Gertrude.—Never mother loved her child as she doated upon you.—While she lived, you may remember, you were never out of her sight—worlds would not have bribed her to have parted with you; and now could she see you thus great, and——"

"Oh! that she had suffered me to remain the beggar I was born!"

"Do not talk thus, dearest Gertrude, if you would not kill me—compose yourself, and all will yet be well—it will indeed—your father——"

"Do not—do not call him—Oh God! forgive me, wretch that I am!" exclaimed she, almost frantic with horror at herself for so abhorring his name.

"Well, your mother, my dearest—think of her—think how you loved her—had she lived, you would

not have shamed her with this disclosure?—You will not bring disgrace upon her memory?"—And Gertrude wept softer tears, as she called to mind the well-remembered proofs of her mother's love.

"How *could* she do it?" cried she again, roused to agony.

"Ah, Gertrude! can you wonder the temptation was too strong to be resisted?—Consider how we were both situated—you could bring nothing but additional care and poverty to her—to me you would ensure riches and honour—do not condemn us—Gertrude, say you forgive me?"

Gertrude's whole frame shook with emotion, but she remained silent.

"Gertrude—Gertrude?" cried Mrs St Clair, seizing her hands, "have I not been as a mother to you—will you not say you forgive me?"

"I *cannot!*" gasped Gertrude, in a wild suffocating voice, and she turned shuddering away.

Her maid now entered to announce the arrival of Dr Bruce; adding, that Colonel Delmour hoped her ladyship would see the Doctor without delay.

"Lady Rossville will ring when she is ready," said Mrs St Clair, in violent agitation; then when Masham withdrew, she cried, "Gertrude, you will not betray yourself to Dr Bruce! promise me—promise me that, for the love of Heaven!" and she wrung her hand.

"To him!" repeated Gertrude.—"No—I will not see him at all—why should I?—'tis a mockery—leave me—leave me to myself," cried she, with a fresh burst of grief.

But just then Masham returned to say that Colonel Delmour was very impatient for her ladyship to see the Doctor; and as she spoke, Delmour's voice was heard outside the door. At the dear loved sound, again Gertrude's pale cheek glowed for a moment, and her

eyes brightened; but in another instant she dropped her head with an air of hopeless dejection—and Dr Bruce was now ushered in.

Mrs St Clair anticipated all questions by taking the Doctor apart, and telling him candidly, as she called it, that the Countess was suffering under a severe nervous attack, and that something of a composing nature was what was wanting. Gertrude was, therefore, spared answering any questions; and having felt her pulse, administered some drops, and recommended quietness, the Doctor withdrew to make his report to Delmour, who was impatiently waiting for him. Mrs St Clair at the same time hastened to Lewiston to prevent him, if possible, from doing more mischief; and Gertrude was once more left to the care of her attendants, who imagined she slept, from the still and silent state in which she lay.

Chapter xcvj.

. . . . . O, Fortune! with what weight
Of misery dost thou crush me!
This is a stain fixed by some vengeful power,
Surpassing thought; all that remains of life
Must waste away in anguish: such a sea
Of woe swells o'er me, that never can I rise
Again, or stem the surge of this affliction.

EURIPIDES.

BUT sleep was far from Gertrude's eyelids; and in the multitude of her thoughts within her, she felt as though she should never know repose again. Her very soul sickened and her brain whirled at the horrible destiny just opened to her. To fall from her high estate to a condition so vile and abject! Instead of the heiress of a mighty house, the daughter of a noble line, to be a beggar—an impostor—the child

of one against whom her whole being revolted! Yet voluntarily to proclaim this to the world—to stand forth a mark for the finger of scorn to point at—to be laughed at by some, despised by others—to leave each thing beloved most dearly—to become an outcast, an alien! Could she do this and live? No, she would pass away in secret—she would consume her days in grief and in penitence—she would abjure, renounce, fly all that she had loved and enjoyed—she would dwell in darkness and in solitude—few and sad would be her days, but she would go down to the grave as Countess of Rossville—her "soul was ready to choose strangling rather than life," for what had life now to offer to her of good or fair? Delmour—ah! there her heart trembled within her—this day she had promised to be his! At that instant a note was delivered to her, which Colonel Delmour himself had brought to the door of her apartment, and insisted on its being instantly delivered.

"I claim your promise, dearest Gertrude.—Dr Bruce is of opinion you may be removed to Millbank with perfect safety—if you wish it, he and Masham will accompany you in the carriage, and I shall attend it.—Say but yes, my angel, to your adoring F. D."

Here was a fresh wave of misery to overwhelm the unhappy Gertrude! The cup of happiness was held to her lips by the hand she loved, and she herself must dash it to the ground for ever! Poor—low-born—degraded as she was, what a bride for the proud, high-minded Delmour!

"And Delmour—would even Delmour despise and reject me if he knew all!"—thought she, as for a moment she covered her face with her hands, and bowed beneath the humiliation. But soon a loftier feeling succeeded. "No," thought she, "he will not—I *know* he will not." Then, as a bitter pang shot

through her heart, "But if—if we must part, it shall be in the face of day—he shall learn all from myself.—He loved me, and he will love me still—but he loved me as Countess of Rossville—he must now love me as an outcast—a beggar—— If he respected me as Countess of Rossville, he shall still respect me, low-born—beggar as I am!"

She desired her maid to say to Colonel Delmour that she would see him in the library; then, rising, she bathed her eyes and adjusted her hair, and endeavoured to dispel, as much as possible, the traces of grief and agitation from her face.

"I will not go to him a weeping supplicant!" thought she—"I will owe nothing to his pity;" and she repressed each rising emotion, and with a calm and noble air entered the apartment where her lover awaited her. But what a change had a few hours of intense suffering made upon her! Her mutable countenance had now all the fixedness and paleness of marble; and those eyes—those lovely eyes, which had so often met him with smiles, and which always "seemed to love whate'er they looked upon," now heavy and brimful, drooped beneath the weight of their swollen eyelids.

"Gertrude!—my own!—my adored!" cried Delmour, as he took her passive hand, and led her to a seat—"speak to me, dearest!—it is death to me to see you thus."

Gertrude opened her lips and vainly tried to articulate; but her tongue seemed to cleave to her mouth.

"This is dreadful—it will kill you to remain in this house—you must leave it, indeed you must, my love—your carriage is ready—suffer me to order it;" and he was going to ring the bell, when Gertrude laid her hand upon his arm. Again she strove to speak; but a sigh, so deep, so sad, burst from her heart, as told the unutterable anguish of her soul.

Gertrude tells Delmour of her parentage.

"Gertrude!—my love! my life!"—exclaimed Delmour, terror-struck, as he felt her hand grow colder, and saw her features gradually becoming more rigid—"for God's sake speak to me!"

Gertrude spoke; but her voice was so changed that Delmour started at the sound.

"You love me, Frederick, I know you do—and I—but no matter—I never can be yours now.—Delmour, I have a strange, a frightful tale to tell you—I—I am not what I seem—I am not Countess of Rossville—I am a beggar!" She hid her face for a moment; while Delmour, too much amazed to answer, remained silent.

"It is true—they have told me all—all—all—I am *his* daughter—*he* is my father!" And her voice grew wilder in her attempts to speak calmly and firmly.

"My dearest Gertrude, you take this matter too violently; although your mother has made a degrading marriage, that ought not to affect you in this manner—it does not interfere with your rights, or diminish my attachment to you—why then——"

"Ah, Delmour! you are deceived—she is not my mother—I am *his* daughter—the daughter of Jacob Lewiston—I have been an usurper, but I did not know it!"

The dreadful truth now flashed upon Delmour with the force and the rapidity of a stroke of lightning, and he remained horror-struck beneath its shock. For some minutes neither of them spoke; but Gertrude's breast heaved with agitation she would not betray, and her eyes were distended in endeavours to retain her tears within the brim.

"Good God!" at length exclaimed Delmour, striking his forehead in a distracted manner—"Gertrude—dearest!" and he seized her hands. "No—it cannot be—you are mine—my own——"

"I *was*—but not now," said Gertrude; and her

heart almost broke in the effort to appear calm in resigning him.—"Not now—you are free!" added she, in an accent of despair.

"Free!—Oh, Gertrude! my life!" and he paced the room with disordered steps; then suddenly stopping, "No—you must—you shall be mine—I will not believe it—by Heaven 'tis false!—you—you the daughter of that——"

"Oh! he is my father!" cried Gertrude, shuddering.

"No—there is some infernal plot at the bottom of this—it shall be cleared up;" and he was hurrying towards the door, when Gertrude called to him—

"Stay, Delmour, 'tis from me you shall hear it all—I will not that you should hear it from another that you have loved an impostor—a beggar!" And with desperate energy she recapitulated to him the evidence of her birth, as detailed by Mrs St Clair. When she had ended, Delmour said nothing; but he buried his face in his handkerchief in an agony of grief, and Gertrude's high-wrought fortitude almost forsook her as she beheld her lover thus overcome. She felt she could not long support the continuance of the scene; and she said—

"Now I have told you all, Delmour—I am no longer what I have been. From this hour let my shame—my disgrace be proclaimed, and—let us part!"

"Gertrude, if you would not drive me mad, do not—Oh! you know not how I love—how I adore you!" And he pressed her hands to his lips, and Gertrude felt his burning tears fall upon them, and every drop was as a life-drop from her heart.

"Gertrude!" exclaimed he, passionately, "you have never loved as I do, or you could not be thus unmoved."

A faint smile of anguish quivered on Gertrude's pale

lip, and a single tear rolled slowly down her bloodless cheek.

Again a long and bitter pause ensued. Delmour still held her hands in his, while he seemed to struggle with contending emotions. Suddenly Lewiston's loud voice was heard, as if issuing some orders in his usual authoritative tone. The blood rushed to Delmour's face—he started up, and dropped the hands he had but a moment before clasped in his own. Gertrude, too, rose—cold drops were upon her brow, and she shook in every joint; but, by a desperate effort, she gained the door. She thought she heard her name pronounced by her lover in an accent of tenderness and despair; but a thousand sounds were ringing in her ears—a thousand figures were before her eyes—and she only reached her own apartment when all sights and sounds had vanished; for she fainted.

———o———

Chapter xcvij.

What greater gryefe may come to any lyfe
Than after sweete to taste the bitter sower?
Or, after peace, to fall at warre and stryfe?
Or, after myrth, to have a cause to lower?
Upon such props false Fortune buylds her tower;
On sodayne chaunge her flitting frames be set,
Where is no way for to escape her net.

THOMAS CHURCHYARD.

DELMOUR'S whole mind was a chaos of conflicting passions. That he loved was undoubted; but his love was compounded of many ingredients—pride, vanity, ambition, self-interest; and now all these were up in arms to oppose each purer or more generous sentiment that might have found place in his heart. In this state of excitation he sought Mrs St Clair, who was yet ignorant of what had passed in her

absence; but Delmour's disordered looks and wild incoherent expressions soon proclaimed that all was disclosed. To deny or prevaricate she felt would be in vain—the terrors of guilt and of shame were upon her—infamy and ruin had overtaken her. There was nothing left to suspicion or conjecture—the evidence was infallible—it was her own. Still, while her very soul sank beneath the weight of her crime, her proud spirit refused to humble itself before the man she hated; and her only reply to his reproaches and invectives was, that he would now have an opportunity of proving the sincerity and the disinterestedness of his attachment.

More than ever exasperated, Delmour hastened from her to shut himself up in his own apartment. Distracted at the thoughts of the evil which had come upon him, his soul was tossed in a whirlwind of contending passions. To resign Gertrude—his own beautiful, his betrothed Gertrude!—there was despair in the thought; but to marry the descendant of the huntsman—the daughter of Lewiston—it was madness to dream of such degradation! Innocent as she was in herself, there was a stigma affixed to her name which never could be effaced—a changeling! the child of wretchedness and imposture! No!—he never could dishonour himself and his family by such an alliance. Then the image of Gertrude, rich in native loveliness—the tender, confiding, noble-minded Gertrude, rose to view, as if to mock the littleness of that pride that would have spurned her.

Delmour passed a sleepless night, and the morning found him resolved to renounce Gertrude for ever! But how to do it was the difficulty—to see her again was impossible.—He attempted to write to her, but could not.—He felt that he was about to pierce a heart which beat but for him, and his hand shrunk from the barbarous task. But something must be done—it was impossible that Lewiston and he could remain under

one roof—he shuddered at the thoughts of meeting him—meeting him as the father of Gertrude—the man who, but for her disclosure, might even now have been his father-in-law—yet to send him from the house would be to turn Gertrude also from the home which but yesterday she had held as her own, and that was too cruel even for Delmour's selfish heart. The result of his deliberations was, that he would leave things as they were, and repair to London to consult with his brother upon what ought to be done; and having formed this resolution, he wrote as follows to Gertrude:—

"DEAREST, ADORED GERTRUDE,

"I will not attempt to paint to you what I have suffered since that sad disclosure took place;—would to Heaven it were in my power to raise you to that height from which you have fallen, or rather from which you have so nobly cast yourself!—but, alas, my beloved! by uniting your fate with mine at present, I should only involve you in deeper ruin. I have neither wealth nor power to bear you through this overwhelming tide of misfortune; and yet to lose you—voluntarily to renounce one a thousand times dearer to me than my own existence!—No, Gertrude, I cannot—I will not resign you!—mine you are in soul and in love—are you not, Gertrude? You never can love another—and what other ever could love you as I have done? My brain is on fire—I scarcely know what I write; but you will understand me, dearest, most beloved!—It is better that we should not meet. I will depart, but you shall remain here as mistress for the present. I will see my brother; but, until then, let nothing more be said on this heartrending disclosure. Farewell, dearest!—Pity your distracted, but adoring, F. H. D."

Meanwhile Gertrude had remained in a state of

morbid woe, infinitely more alarming than the wildest ebullitions of grief. She neither spoke nor wept, but remained silent and passive—her glassy eyes fixed on vacancy, and her ear unconscious of every sound.

When Delmour's note was brought to her she closed her eyes, and turned away her head from it—while she thought, "It is all over—he has cast me from him!"

"It is from Colonel Delmour, my lady," said Masham, soothingly, who concluded there was a lover's quarrel in the case. "He is most petiklarly anxious to hear how your ladyship is this morning."

Still her lady remained motionless.

"The Colonel looks so ill, my lady—I'm sure it will break his heart entirely if your ladyship does not take his letter."

A deep sigh burst from Gertrude's heart; but Masham hailed it as a happy omen, and went on—

"Dear, my lady! if you did but see the Colonel, I don't think you'd have known him—his face, my lady, is as white as your handkerchief; and his beautiful eyes, my lady, quite red, for all the world, as he had been crying—indeed, my lady, I could scarce keep from crying myself to look at him." And, upon the faith of this pathetic appeal, Masham made another attempt to prevail upon her mistress to take his letter; but again Gertrude rejected it.

"Dear, my lady! what shall I do? I could no more tell the Colonel that you would not look at his letter, than I could put a knife into his heart, my lady—just the same thing.—Oh! my lady, Smith says he hasn't been in bed all night; but has been walking up and down his room, tearing his hair, and taking on so, that he says he's sure he'll lose his senses unless something is done, my lady." And Masham ended with a sob; for Delmour's gaiety, his good looks, and his

liberality had completely won Masham's favour. "I'm sure, my lady, he'll either kill himself or somebody else, if your ladyship refuses him, for——" But at the horrid idea of Delmour and her father engaged in mortal strife, Gertrude shuddered; then, taking the letter, she tore it open, and, as she read it, tears again found their way to her eyes.

"Rash—unjust—misjudging that I am!" thought she—"he does not—he will not renounce me!—Involve me in deeper ruin by uniting my fate with his!—Ah! —no—no—'tis I who would involve him in ruin!—Yes—I am his in soul and in love!" and the hard unnatural tension of mind under which she had laboured gradually melted into softer feelings. "But he loves me—why—why then does he leave me?" and again her doubts and her fears returned; but then there was so much delicacy in wishing to have the discovery of her disgrace kept secret until he could have made arrangements for her, she had no doubt, to soften the blow as much as possible, that again her sanguine spirit exulted in the truth and honour of her lover. Had she followed the dictates of her own feelings, she would instantly have declared herself to her whole household; but Delmour had besought her not, and, painful as it was, she thought, for his sake, she would submit for a while to carry on the deception.

But she would not appear—she would not see the light—she would pass the time in darkness and in solitude; and her soul sickened at the very idea of ever again beholding Mrs St Clair and Lewiston. That lady and she had not met since the disclosure had been made—she had then hastened to her own apartment; and there, under the influence of guilt, shame, and passion, had swallowed the remainder of the laudanum contained in the phial, which, although not sufficient to make her sleep the sleep of death, had the effect

of throwing her into a convulsive stupor, from which she could not be roused. Dr Bruce had taken leave, after prescribing for Gertrude, whose disorder he soon discovered was altogether of a mental nature, and as such beyond his skill. Lewiston had, therefore, been left to carouse by himself, and to be his own master of the revels. He was a man of much too coarse a mind to conceive the delicacy of such a character as Gertrude's, and had always laughed at the idea of her being such a fool as to betray her own secret; he, therefore, remained quite unconscious of the storm which was ready to burst upon him. Being always on the watch to spy every thing that was going on, he soon came to the knowledge of Colonel Delmour's intended departure, which he heard of with great exultation, and thought the field was now his own. His vulgar curiosity, therefore, led him, as usual, into the midst of the preparations, and he lounged about the carriage while it was packing—questioned the servants—examined and patted the horses—and waited till Delmour appeared; when he briskly accosted him with—

"So, you're for the road, sir—fine mornin'—my lady's four bays will carry you at a famous rate—you only have them as far as Barnford, I guess.—I had some thoughts of taking them out myself to-day to give the ladies a ride; but you're welcome to them, sir—quite welcome—the greys will do for us."

Delmour with difficulty refrained from spurning him; but he repressed his rage, and, as he passed, said in a low voice—"Beware how you abuse the indulgence shown you in the name of the Earl of Rossville, for the sake of one——" He could not finish, but, throwing himself into the carriage, drove off.

There was something so stern and commanding in his eye and voice, and yet so melancholy and subdued in his manner, that Lewiston felt alarmed.—"The

Earl of Rossville, who the deuce is he!" was his exclamation as he turned quickly round, and entered the house.—Could any body have blabbed? not Mrs St Clair—not Gertrude, for it was the interest of both to conceal it—no, the thing was impossible, but he must see them; and he immediately sent a message to Mrs St Clair, demanding an interview. But it was answered by her maid in great agitation, to report that her lady had with the utmost difficulty been roused from her stupor—and that she was not herself, her mind was wandering—the doctor must be sent for.

"Come—come—I'm for none of your doctors," cried Lewiston—"a prying, useless, swindling pack! —Why, what did that pompous fellow do for my lady Countess yesterday? Felt her pulse, and gave her a glass of water—eh—and for that he pockets his five guineas! Why a man would be ruined in this country if he were to give way to women's nonsensical vagaries. — Come, I'm something of a doctor myself, I'll go and see your lady—come along." And drawing Mrs Lisle's arm within his, he marched along, and, in spite of her remonstrances, made his way to Mrs St Clair.

But she was, as her maid had represented her, in no condition to answer questions or receive company—there was a total aberration of intellect, and even Lewiston's presence made no impression on her. He was so far relieved to find she was not in the way of endangering the secret, as she merely muttered to herself a few unintelligible words about her daughter, then repeated the word "daughter" to herself many times over without ceasing.

"She'll come to herself by and by if you'll let her alone," said Lewiston, as he left her, with the resolution of next seeing his daughter.

Chapter xcviij.

Non, je ne serai point complice de ses crimes!
RACINE.

GERTRUDE'S restored confidence in her lover had given an impulse to her mind; and she was beginning to recover in some degree from the dreadful shock she had sustained, when Lewiston's message, desiring to see her again, deprived her of the little composure she had regained. Her agitation was so excessive, that Masham, in alarm, summoned Mrs Roberts; and both agreed that it would be as much as their lady's life was worth to see any body that was not particularly agreeable to her at present; and this opinion Mrs Roberts delivered in person to Lewiston, who, from some hints he had thrown out that morning to the servants, was generally considered as the husband of Mrs St Clair, and consequently the stepfather of their lady. This idea was farther confirmed by Colonel Delmour's sudden departure; and in that capacity he found himself feared and obeyed, where he would otherwise have been ridiculed and despised. After swearing a little at Mrs Roberts's communication, he said—

"Well, mistress, take you care of your lady—feed her well—give her plenty of good stout meat and drink—none of your slip-slops—none of your meal and water, your gruels and panadas.—Why I'd have a fit of hysterics myself, if I was to be fed upon such stuff; and, hark ye, if there's such a thing as a nice plump little sucking pig to be had, now's the time—have it killed directly, and it will be prime for my lady's dinner; and, do you hear, tell that French fellow of a cook to take care to have the ears crisp, or I'll slit his own for him!—Stop, Goody," as Mrs Roberts was

retiring in silent horror—and he pulled out his watch—"Now, go you to my lady Countess, and say, that, as I'm a reasonable good-natured man, and always behave handsumly when I'm a-treated handsumly, I shall allow her twenty-four hours to settle her brains, or her spirits, or whatever is wrong—and then I shall expect her to wait upon me here, with a merry face—as much sooner as she likes—she'll be welcome, but not a minute after the twenty-four hours—now trot, Goody—don't forget the pig—a three weeks old will serve my lady Countess,"—and he went off singing a vulgar sea song. He then went to order out all the horses, which he made the servants parade before the house, while he tried some of them himself; next ordered a chaise-and-four, and two out-riders, as if he had been going a journey; but he merely drove up and down the avenue, till, tired of that, he fell to quoits with the servants; and, in short, completely illustrated the homely adage of, "Set a beggar on horseback," &c.

Gertrude felt grateful for the respite allowed her, and she resolved, if possible, to prove her obedience by meeting her father, and at the same time declaring to him what she had done, even although she trembled to think of all she would have to encounter. Should he persist in his threat of carrying her off to America, what would become of her?—who could interpose between a father and his child?—who could—alas! who *would* save her? There was no one to whom she could appeal—for there was no one being with whom she could claim any kindred, save him to whom she owed her being. Where was Delmour at this trying moment?—why had he deserted her? His was the voice to have whispered peace to her soul—his the arm to have supported and protected her; but he, her only earthly prop, had left her!

She was roused from the overwhelming conviction of

her own utter helplessness, and the frightful destiny that perhaps awaited her, by the indefatigable Masham, who, in her softest accents, besought her ladyship's pardon. But there was a box of new dresses just arrived for her ladyship from Madame Delacour—such beauties! they were fit for a princess!—would her ladyship be pleased only just to take a look of them.—"See what a *déshabille*, my lady!—when you please to rise, how charming it will be."

Time was when Gertrude's eyes would have sparkled with pleasure at sight of the beautiful dresses now displayed; but she turned away from them with a shudder, and desired they might be taken away.

"These were for the Countess of Rossville," thought she, with a bitter pang; "and I, impostor—beggar that I am!—shall I ever again dare to appear as such?" She covered her face with her hands, and groaned in spirit; then, as if struck with some sudden thought, she called her maid.

"Masham, I would have a dress very different from any of these—I would have one made of the coarsest of stuffs, such as poor people or charity children wear." She stopped to wipe away the tears which covered her face, while Masham stood in speechless amazement. "It must be very coarse and quite plain, Masham; and you must set about getting such a one for me directly."

"Sure, my lady, you don't mean it for yourself?" cried the amazed Masham, doubting either her own or her lady's senses had gone astray. But her lady repeated her commands in so peremptory a manner, that Masham dared not expostulate on the subject, but set about obeying the order, strange and unseemly as it appeared.

Gertrude had inquired for Mrs St Clair, and she was told she was keeping her room; and she asked no

farther, for the mention of her name was an effort almost too much for her, associated as it was in her mind with all the degradation and ruin she had brought upon her.

Heavily as the time wore away in tears and solitude, the hour appointed by Lewiston drew near too soon. In the interval he had sent many messages, which, rough and wayward as they were, yet showed a species of kindness in their way; but his ideas of affection seemed to be of the lowest description, and the only way in which he testified his was through the medium of meat and drink; and many was the savoury mess he despatched to Gertrude, who turned with loathing from such coarse demonstrations of paternal regard.

Gertrude clothed herself in the sordid garb which had been prepared for her; but her beauty was of too noble and decided a character to be dependent upon adventitious aid: the regularity of her features—their touching expression—the sadness of her dove-like eyes—the paleness of her complexion contrasted with the dark ringlets which fell negligently around her face—the exquisite form of her head and throat—her distinguished air, even in humility—all these only appeared the more pre-eminent in the absence of aught to distract the attention. Averse to having the appearance of being compelled to meet her father, she repaired to the saloon rather before the appointed time—she entered, with downcast eyes and a throbbing heart, unconscious of every thing but that she was to meet, for the first time as her father, him who had so long been the object of her fear and her abhorrence. But what was her surprise when, upon entering, the person who sprung forward to meet and to welcome her, and to press her hands in his—was Lyndsay!

"Gertrude, dear Gertrude!" exclaimed he, as he gazed upon her sad and colourless countenance, "how

ill you look! Something is wrong." But as the recollection of their last meeting rushed upon Gertrude's mind, her heart swelled at the thoughts of her abasement, and the blush of shame rose almost to her brow.

"I have heard—and it is that report has brought me here now—that the man whom you have such cause to dread is an inmate of your house—at least I guess it is the same—tell me, Gertrude, is it so?"

"You will hear all soon enough," said Gertrude, in a low suffocating voice.—"Leave me—Oh! leave me now!"

"No, never, till I see you safe and happy," cried Lyndsay, with emotion. "Gertrude, I am your cousin—your friend—your brother if you will—speak to me then as such—say, what can I do to serve you?"

But Gertrude only answered with her tears; then repeated—

"Leave me—Oh! leave me!"

"I will, if there is any one here to protect—to save you——"

At that instant Lewiston entered with the swagger of a man who wished to show he was quite at home. At sight of Lyndsay he started, and was evidently disconcerted; but quickly recovering, he said, with his usual assurance—

"So squire, I didn't expect to find you here—I've just been seeing some young puppies have their ears cropped—sit down, sir;" then approaching Gertrude, who rose to meet him, and bowed her head towards him, he took her hand and shook it.—"Well, my lady Countess, how goes it now?—By jingo!" as he surveyed her dress, "you women are always in extremes. —Why, to-day you're dressed like a charity-school girl!"

Lyndsay was too much confounded to speak—he had heard, in a vague way, that a foreigner, whom no one

knew any thing about, was living at Rossville with the ladies—and that Colonel Delmour had left it abruptly in consequence of a quarrel—with various other particulars, some true, some false, which had been circulated by the servants, and soon reached the ears of their masters and mistresses. No sooner had Lyndsay heard them, than, forgetting all Gertrude's unkindness and ingratitude, he thought only of how he could serve her, and instantly set off for that purpose.

He had only arrived the moment before she appeared, and the first glance at her had told him a tale of woe and suffering that filled him with grief and amazement. The gay, proud, brilliant Countess of Rossville, was gone; and there stood the sad, humble, downcast Gertrude, in passive endurance of, if not actually inviting familiarity, which formerly her high spirit would have spurned. He looked at her for a moment in silence, and again the deadly paleness which had overspread her face at Lewiston's entrance was succeeded by a deep flush, and she raised her hand as if to hide it from his view.

"Well, sir," said Lewiston, seating himself on a sofa, and placing Gertrude beside him, while he still held her hand, "this is not our first meeting—but let that pass—you're my lady Countess's cousin, I understand, eh?—that's enough—sit down."

"You have the advantage of me, sir," said Lyndsay, bridling his indignation for Gertrude's sake; "it seems you know who I am—who you are I have yet to learn."

"All in good time, sir.—Would you choose to take a glass of anything after your ride, or a bit of cold meat? There's a nice little fellow of a pig that I ordered for my lady's dinner yesterday, and she wouldn't look at him it seems; so I've ordered him for my lunch to-day—as fat as an eel and as tender as a chicken, I'll answer for him—I saw him scalded myself."

Agony was painted in every feature of Gertrude's face—Lyndsay saw it; and, wishing to end this strange scene, he said calmly to Lewiston—

"Lady Rossville seems too unwell to take an interest in such discussions—if you will accompany me to another room——"

"With all my heart," cried Lewiston, jumping up.—"You say true, my lady is a little narvous or so; but she'll soon get over it," with a wink to her.

Gertrude rose too—her colour changed from white to red, and from red to white, and she gasped as though she were suffocating; at length, by a violent effort, she said—

"Go then; but, Lyndsay, remember he is—my father!"

Lyndsay stood speechless, and for a moment Lewiston was thrown into consternation; but, quickly recovering himself, he said—"Aye—come along, it shall all be explained," and he moved impatiently towards the door. But Lyndsay saw only Gertrude standing motionless in shame and anguish—her head bent beneath her humiliation, and the cold drops of agony on her brow—he flew towards her.

"Gertrude," cried he, "what do you mean? Your father! speak, tell me——"

"Well, since the cat's out of the bag," cried Lewiston, "you may as well catch it at once—I'm married to my lady Countess's mother, so I am—that's all—what is there so dreadful wonderful in that?" And again he cast a fierce and threatening look at Gertrude.

"Is it even so, Gertrude?" said Lyndsay. "Then this can be no home for you at present——"

"What right have you to meddle between a father and his daughter?" said Lewiston, fiercely.—"I am her stepfather, and I have the best right to manage her;" and he would have taken her hand, but Lyndsay placed

himself between them.—"Lady Rossville once chose me for her guardian—she will yet acknowledge me as such—will you not, Gertrude?—you will trust yourself with me, and I will place you in safety."

"Oh! he is my father—my own father!" cried Gertrude, in an accent of despair.

"Surely—surely!" exclaimed Lewiston, hastily—"I am the husband of her mother—her own father—you say true—I am—I am."

"No—no—no—she is not my mother—she told me all—he *is* my father!" and Gertrude almost shrieked as she uttered it.

"She is a-ravin," cried Lewiston—"I say she is mad."

"'Tis you have made her so, then," said Lyndsay, passionately; then, turning to Gertrude, "Dearest Gertrude, try to compose yourself—retire—I will——"

"He is my father!" repeated Gertrude, convulsively—"but save me from him!" and she clung to Lyndsay's arms.

"I will, dearest Gertrude—do not be afraid." Then, turning to Lewiston, he said, in a voice of forced calmness, but with an air of the most resolute determination—"You are mistaken if you suppose that, as the husband of Mrs St Clair, you have acquired any lawful authority over this lady.—If you claim it by any other tie, you must first bring forward your evidence, and have it recognised, before it can be acknowledged—in the meantime, Lady Rossville is under my protection—I am her guardian, and from her own lips only will I listen to what has passed.—You will do well, then, to leave this room without altercation, otherwise it may be unpleasant for you."

"Oh! no—no," cried Gertrude, in an agony of terror—"he is my father,—do not use him ill!"

"Don't you hear her acknowledge my authority?"

cried Lewiston; "and what title have you, then, to interfere, you——"

"Gertrude, will you go into the next room for a few minutes?" said Lyndsay, and he would have led her to the door.

"Aye, do—go along," cried Lewiston; "women are always better out of the way when there's business on hand."

"I will not leave you," said Gertrude, as pale and trembling she still held by Lyndsay.

"But I order you to——"

"Speak but another syllable to this lady," interrupted Lyndsay, on the point of losing all self-command, "and I will instantly call the servants to force you from her presence."

"Coward!" cried Lewiston, furiously.

The blood rushed to Lyndsay's brow.

"Edward, Edward!" cried Gertrude,—"he is my father!"

"Gertrude, I know you only as Lady Rossville, and as such I *will* speak to you alone," said Lyndsay. He rang the bell, and when the servant answered it, desired him, in a calm but firm manner, to show that gentleman to the library; then, waving his hand to Lewiston, in a way that showed he would be obeyed, he said, "I will join you there in half an hour;" and Lewiston, casting a threatening look at Gertrude, and muttering imprecations on Lyndsay, was thus compelled to withdraw.

——o——

Chapter xcix.

. . . . . He whose mind
Is virtuous is alone of noble kind;
Though poor in fortune, of celestial race;
And he commits the crime who calls him base.
DRYDEN.

BUT it was with difficulty Gertrude could be brought to repeat to Lyndsay all that she had already recapitulated to Delmour. She had then been under an excitement of mind, to which every thing had given way—she had felt as though she were then about to cast the die for life or death; and, in the energy of desperation, she had told all with the eloquence of feelings which mocked controul. But here there was no such stimulus, and she shrank from repeating the hateful and ignominious detail of her disgrace. It was throwing herself too much upon the sympathy and the commiseration of one on whom she had no claim—one whom, in the hey-day of her prosperity, she had treated with coldness and ingratitude; and she leant her burning brow on her hand, and strove to steel herself against the kind and affectionate entreaties Lyndsay used to gain her confidence. At length, he gathered from her such particulars as enabled him to trace out the whole of the dark transaction which had involved her in ruin. For a time his emotion kept him silent; while Gertrude sat with her elbows resting on a table, and her face buried in her hands. But Lyndsay was ever more intent on allaying the afflictions of others than in indulging his own feelings; and he soon mastered his own agitation, that he might be the better able to calm Gertrude's; but his voice faltered as he spoke.

"Dearest Gertrude," said he, "I know it will be in

vain to talk of comfort to you in the first anguish of your mind; but—ah, Gertrude! could you discern the hand that has thus smitten you!—could you look up to Heaven and say, it is my Father's will!——"

"I do," cried Gertrude, in a low suffocating voice. But, alas! the feeling burnt feebly in her breast.—"And any thing but this I could have borne; but disgrace—infamy——" her emotion choked her utterance.

"No, Gertrude, you are unjust to yourself—ungrateful to God—if you attach such ideas of personal degradation to what has befallen you.—'Tis true you have no longer a title, a vain empty title—or wealth to spend perhaps to satiety—but how much nobler a being are you now, thus dignified by voluntary self-abasement, and rich in all the native gifts of your Creator, than ever you were, or would have been, as the mere favoured child of this world!—Ah, Gertrude!—dear Gertrude! could you but view yourself with my eyes!"

"To have been an impostor—an usurper!" exclaimed she.

"How perverse sorrow has made you, Gertrude!—You are neither—you have been the victim of imposture, but your own name is pure and spotless—it is more—to those who can appreciate virtue it will carry a nobler sound along with it than any that heraldry could have bestowed.—How poor is the boast of ancestry, compared with that lofty sense of honour which has made you trample under foot all those allurements to which your soul still cleaves even in renouncing!—This is greatness!"

"Who but you will judge me thus?"

"All who love virtue—all who love you, Gertrude——"

"Love me!" repeated she, relapsing into an agony

of grief—"Oh! who could love me—base—vile—abject as I am?"

"Gertrude!" cried Lyndsay, in emotion almost equal to her own, "do you, indeed, ask who could love you?"

But Gertrude was silent, for her thoughts were all of Delmour. Lyndsay's agitation increased.

"You ask me who could love you, Gertrude? He who has once loved you truly will love you still—will love you more than ever—I——" He stopped, then took two or three turns about the room in great disorder; while Gertrude, absorbed in grief, and thinking only of his words as applied to her lover, was little aware of what was passing in Lyndsay's generous heart. In a few minutes he regained his usual calmness, and, approaching her, took her hand and said—

"Gertrude, you are unable to stand this storm which has come upon you—you must retire to your own apartment, and allow me to act for you—I promise you that nothing shall provoke me to violence—I promise you that I will bear every thing."

"Oh! you have borne too much already for me," cried Gertrude with a burst of weeping.—"My best—my only friend!" added she in a voice choked with emotion.

"You will then look upon me as your friend—your guardian—your brother—will you not, Gertrude?—Such and all will I be to you, so help me God!"

Gertrude could not speak, but she pressed the hand which still held hers in grateful acknowledgment; and relying on Lyndsay's promise, as she knew she well might, she, at last, consented that he should see her father alone, and that she should await the result of the conference.

After seeing her mind somewhat strengthened, and

her spirits more composed, Lyndsay then repaired to the library, where he found Lewiston vainly attempting to hide his rage by affecting to busy himself in coolly turning over the books, while it was evident he was only exercising his fury upon them. He took no notice of Lyndsay's entrance, but went on tossing over the leaves of a splendid folio in a manner enough to have made a bibliopolist faint; then began to whistle with an air of unconcern, which, however, did not sit very easily upon him.

Lyndsay waited for a few minutes in silence, then said—

"I have been hearing a strange tale, sir, from one——"

"Have you so, squire?" rudely interrupted Lewiston, looking at an engraving in the book, as if deeply interested in it; "have you so?—and what then?"

"Then I would have your account, sir, of the same story."

"You would?—Then I must trouble you, sir, to let me know what your story is in the first place, that we may onderstand each other, sir."

Lyndsay repeated what Gertrude had communicated to him, and added—

"It is, therefore, in vain to attempt to carry on any farther concealment—the truth must be proclaimed; but for the sake of one whom hitherto I have only known as a dearly loved relative, I would fain have it softened, as——"

"Idiot!" exclaimed Lewiston furiously, as he hurled the book from him with violence, and pushed over an inkstand—then kicked back his chair, and drove every thing aside, while he took two or three strides across the room, biting his thumb in the manner of one who must have something, no matter what, on which to wreak his passion.

Lyndsay was too judicious to interrupt him; disgusting as the spectacle of coarse uncontrolled passion was, for Gertrude's sake he submitted to it in silence. At length Lewiston stopped, and said abruptly—

"Has the fool blabbed to any body else, or is it you that's her only father confessor?"

"I cannot tell whether the disclosure has been made known to any one else," said Lyndsay, for Delmour's name had not been mentioned between them; "but it can signify little, since it must soon be made public."

"Well, she deserves to suffer for her folly—but—you seem to have a liking for her, fool as she is!" Then, as if communing with himself, "She is handsum—oncommon handsum—I've seen nothing like her—she'll make a splendid figire in New Jersey—she'll go well off there. She's a lovely critter! stump the universe, if I ever see a lovelier!"

Lyndsay tried to be calm, even at the idea of the beautiful high-souled Gertrude taken to America to be bartered—sold—by such a savage; and said, "Even if you are the person you give out, it does not necessarily follow that this unfortunate lady must be compelled to reside with you."

"Why what's to become of her?"

"It is unnecessary to discuss that question at present; but be assured she possesses friends, whose influence and fortune—neither of them inconsiderable—will be devoted to her service."

"That is to say, you would marry her such as she is? Well, as you seem to have a likin' for her, I'll tell you what—if the thing has gone no farther, and I don't think it has, or t'other spark wouldn't have set off as he did—why, since you're fond of her, I'll give my consent that you shall have her, upon condition that it's all to be kept snug—she'll come to her senses by and by, and be sorry that she's played the fool

this way.—And more than that, if you'll agree to settle handsum upon me, I'll engage to go back to my own country, which is the best after all; and, since we don't put up together, let us keep on different sides of the Atlantic.—What do you say to that, sir?"

"I say you are a villain," burst from Lyndsay's lips; "and I must have the most clear undeniable evidence that you are the person you profess to be, before I will give credit to it—I do not believe you are the father of Gertrude;" and he fixed his eyes upon him, as though he would have searched his very soul.

The blood rushed to Lewiston's face, and for some minutes he was silent; then recovering himself, he said, in his usual manner—

"I'm all you have for him though, sir, whether you believe it or not—I'm Jacob Ruxton Lewiston, of Perth-Amboy, New Jersey; and that you'll find, if you'll be so good as step over the way and inquire, that you may depend."

"That may be; but there may have been more Jacob Ruxton Lewistons than one."

"Why, haven't I got my wife's letter here?" taking out a pocket-book, and holding it up with triumph—"haven't I the testimony of the priest who witnessed it—and he still alive too, and forthcoming if wanted, and who swore to her never to give it into any hand but her husband's? And isn't there Mrs St Clair aready to swear to me when she comes to herself?—What the plague would you have, sir?"

"All that is insufficient——"

"Perhaps you judge by my looks—I've wore well, I grant you—but I'm intir'd in my forties for all that—married at nineteen—the more fool——"

"Nothing you can now say will have the slightest effect in removing my doubts," said Lyndsay.

"Faith I'm a carin' very little about it," said Lewiston, with affected coolness; "you may keep your doubts, and welcome, for me."

"That I shall certainly do, till I have obtained better evidence than your own. I will send a person, on whose fidelity and prudence I can perfectly rely, to the place from whence you say you came, to procure proofs of your identity—when he returns with these you may then claim your daughter, but not till then. —I am her guardian, and will be answerable for her safety——"

Here Lewiston burst out in a strain of the coarsest invective and imprecations; but Lyndsay remained calm and resolute, and only said—

"In these circumstances, you must be aware this can be no residence for you. You will do well, therefore, to prepare to leave it as soon as you can make your arrangements; and, if the means are wanting, I am ready to furnish you with what is necessary."

He then left the room, and hastened to Gertrude, who was waiting him in an agony of apprehension.

——o——

Chapter c.

Tout se sait tôt ou tard et la vérité perce.
GRESSET.

IT was with caution Lyndsay communicated to Gertrude the suspicions which he entertained; but, to one of her sanguine spirit, the slightest surmise was sufficient to kindle hope in her breast. It was certain she was no longer Countess of Rossville; but not to be the daughter of this man—not to loathe and shudder at him to whom she owed her being, even

this seemed almost happiness. But then, as she thought of the difficulty of procuring evidence from so distant a quarter of the world, her spirit sunk; and she exclaimed, — "But how impossible for me to obtain information, and how vague and unsatisfactory must it be!"

"Trust that to me, dear Gertrude," said Lyndsay. "I will send, by the first ship, a person who will thoroughly investigate into this man's history, and on whose testimony you may safely rely. I would go myself if that would be more satisfactory to you, and if I saw you in a place of safety."

"Oh, Edward!" cried Gertrude, with a burst of tears which, for a moment, choked her utterance; then passionately exclaimed, "*you* protect and save me, while *he*——" She uttered a sob, as though her heart had broke, then remained silent.

Blinded as Gertrude was by romantic passion, she could not but be struck with the contrast between her lover's conduct and that of Lyndsay; and the conviction rushed upon her heart with a bitterness which, for a time, absorbed every other consideration. With emotion scarcely less than her own, Lyndsay now inquired whether she had divulged the secret to any one else. Gertrude struggled for a few moments to regain her composure; then said, "Yes — to one whom it more nearly concerned than any other— and now I wait but to hear from him to make known my disgrace to the whole world."

"How false—how worldly are your notions of disgrace, dear Gertrude!" said Lyndsay. "But I will not stop to combat them now; tell me what you wish to have done—what are your plans?"

"It is Colonel Delmour's wish that I should remain here until I hear from him," said Gertrude, in a faltering voice.

"Be it so, then," said Lyndsay, with emotion; "but remember, Gertrude, you have a home, if you will deign to accept of it; my house is yours to command. My aunt, Mrs Lyndsay, whom you have heard me mention, is now in Scotland, and will reside there with you. You would love her if you knew her—for she is good and gentle, and knows what suffering is; for myself, I shall possibly go abroad for a time—or—but, in short, I can be at no loss—so promise that if——"

"No—no, I never will be a pensioner on your bounty," cried Gertrude, in violent agitation—"I will work—beg—Oh, Edward! how you wring my heart!" —and she leaned her head on a table, and wept bitterly.

"Forgive me, dearest Gertrude, if I have hurt you—it was far from my thoughts!—Now, let me recommend to you to retire to your own apartment—you will there be safe from intrusion—leave every thing to me, and rest assured there shall no violence be used—he shall be treated as your father, though not recognised as such."

"But ought I not to see him once more?—and—Oh, Lyndsay!—if I should have turned my father from the house! no—I cannot.—Suffer him to remain—he is—he must be my father—he could not have imposed upon her!"

"At such a distance of time it is quite possible he might; but, dear Gertrude, confide in me, I will do nothing harshly—but you cannot remain under the same roof—it will kill you—he shall go to my house—he shall be well treated—indeed he shall." And Gertrude, calmed by these assurances, at length consented to shut herself up in her own apartment, and even to refuse to see Lewiston if he should attempt it. Lyndsay's next business was to visit Mrs St Clair, in hopes of elucidating something from her; but he was shocked at the situation in which he found her, and immediately sent off for medical assistance; and also to

Mr and Miss Black, requesting them to come to Rossville as soon as possible. He had scarcely done all this, when Lewiston entered the room where he was, with a mingled air of confusion and effrontery.

"So, sir, you're a goin' to raise the country, it seems —two men on horseback a gallopin' away there as if the deuce were in them.—What's the meanin' of all this? —I must see my own daughter," added he, abruptly.

"When you have established your claim to that title you shall see her—till then, I have already told you, I act as her guardian; and, as such, I will not consent to your meeting—if you had the feelings of a parent, you would see the propriety of this."

"Feelins!" exclaimed Lewiston; "by Jove! my feelins have been prettily treated since I came amongst you—may I be flayed if ever I met with such usage!— I say my feelins have been consummately ill-used—and I feel it too!" and he walked up and down in great discomposure.

"She whom you call your daughter is not unmindful of your feelings," said Lyndsay; "although, by my advice, she declines a meeting, which could serve no purpose but to agitate and distress her. She is very desirous that you should be treated with consideration— that you should have every comfort and indulgence which you may require, and I shall therefore make a point of seeing you properly accommodated."

"What does she mean by all this botheration?—does she mean by comfort and indulgences, and so forth, a round sum of money?—If she does, I comprehend that —give me money, and faith I'll soon find comforts and indulgences for myself."

"You must be conscious that, as your daughter, she can have nothing to bestow," said Lyndsay; "but I possess the means; and when assured that you have told me the truth, one way or other—for the truth is all I

require from you—we shall then perhaps be able to come to an agreement."

Lewiston remained thoughtful for a few minutes; then said, "Has the goose quacked to any but yourself?—I want to know."

"Colonel Delmour has been made acquainted with all the particulars, and is gone to consult with his brother, now Earl of Rossville, as to what is to be done.—Be assured at their hands you will meet with little indulgence."

Here Lewiston broke out into an execration against Delmour, and against Gertrude, both of whom he denounced in the bitterest terms; then suddenly changing his tone, he said, "It will cost you something, I can tell you, to send to New Jersey, that it will—a few dollars, I can tell you."

"I have already told you I am ready to pay a good price for the knowledge of the truth, be it what it may," said Lyndsay.

"What! even supposing—only supposing you know that I ar'nt the girl's father?"

"Perhaps I should be inclined to pay more for that discovery than for any other," said Lyndsay, trying to hide his emotion; "but I again repeat it is the truth, and the truth only, I require—and that, sooner or later, I am sure of arriving at—a few months will bring me the knowledge of that."

"I tell you it will cost you an awful of money!"

"And I have told you I am ready to pay it."

"Why how much do you reckon upon?—what lengths are you ready to go—eh?"

"I am willing to go any lengths to detect fraud and villany, but not to reward it—I am perhaps wrong in offering to come to any compromise with you; but regard for the peace of one who is suffering from your villany induces me——"

"Will you give a thousand pound?" interrupted Lewiston, abruptly.

"No—I will give more, if necessary, to discover the truth; but I will not reward falsehood in the same measure."

"Confound your distinctions! Will you give five hundred?—I swear I won't bate a halfpenny."

"Upon condition that you swear solemnly to tell the whole truth," said Lyndsay, "I will do more for you than I am perhaps justified in doing—I will pay your expenses from America and back to it; and I will settle an annuity upon you of fifty pounds per annum, upon condition that you give up that letter and never set foot in Britain again."

"I'd rather have a good round sum at once — I want——"

"It is in vain to say more on the subject," said Lyndsay; "if you wish to have an hour to reflect upon it, you may—but that must be all. I shall immediately set about the necessary steps to be taken in this affair, and it is likely you will repent having refused my offer when too late."

He was moving away, when Lewiston caught his arm.

"Well—will you put in black and white what you have agreed to give—and—and then—we shall see?"

Lyndsay immediately took up a pen and wrote his offer. Lewiston took it—looked at it—hemmed—coloured—and became confused; at last, plucking up effrontery, he said—

"Well then—I am *not* the girl's father, and that's as true as that I stand here."

At this acknowledgment Lyndsay's heart thrilled with rapture, and he could scarcely refrain from flying to Gertrude with the joyful tidings. Lewiston went on—"But I am of the same blood—the only one, by-

the-by, remaining; and the same name—I was her father's cousin; and when the old dotard of a priest came to Perth-Amboy, and inquired for Jacob Ruxton Lewiston, to be sure, he found me—'twas by way of humbug at first that I passed myself off for the man who had been drowned nearly twenty years before; but when I found what his business was—but that's enough —I hate your long skim-milk stories—and so, as soon as you can let me have this on a proper bit of parchment," pointing to the paper Lyndsay had given him, "then I'll wish you a good afternoon and vanish in a wink."

"But how came you to impose yourself so easily upon Mrs St Clair?" inquired Lyndsay, anxious for Gertrude's sake to ascertain every thing. "She had seen the person you represented?"

"She had so, but it was near twenty years ago—and there was a strong family likeness, it seems; besides, I had the letter to shut her mouth; and since I was master of her secret, it signified little to her whether I were the girl's father or not—I had got the upper hand of her any how."

Having got all the information that was wanted, Lyndsay was now only desirous of being rid of so worthless an inmate; and after admonishing him upon the iniquity of his ways, he gave him a letter to his agent, directing the money to be paid, and the bond to be made out for his annuity, then only waited to see him fairly out of the house before he communicated to Gertrude the happy result.

———o———

Chapter cj.

Plus nous etions jeunes, moins nous avions de resignation ; car dans la jeunesse, surtout l'on s'attend au bonheur, l'on croit en avoir le droit ; et l'on se revolte à l'idée de ne pas l'obtenir. —Madame de Stael.

FOR a time Gertrude felt as though she were again restored to all she had lost, in her joy at finding she was not the daughter of the man whom her very soul abhorred ; and, at the moment, all other evils seemed light compared to that she had just escaped.

She could not find words to thank Lyndsay for his generous interference (though that was only known to her in part) ; but her looks—her tears—her broken exclamations, spoke more forcibly the feelings of her heart. But the first flush of joy over, many a bitter thought arose. She was still the fallen, degraded, dependant being,—without a home—without a friend save one—him to whom she owed all—and Delmour ! —but on Delmour she *would* not think—she would wait in all the unnatural calmness of patience which knew not resignation till she heard from him—and then !—and her heart heaved in agony as she thought what might *then* be the result.

Lyndsay seemed to guess something of what was passing in her mind ; for he said, with some emotion—

"Those who like yourself have been imposed upon in this fraud, ought they not also to be undeceived ?—shall I perform that duty for you ?—shall I write——" he stopped ; but Gertrude knew to whom he alluded, and, for a moment, she wished that Delmour were indeed apprised of the discovery which had been made —that she was not the daughter of the horrid Lewiston ; but in another instant she rejected the idea.

"No," thought she—"I will not seem to court his

notice—as heiress of Rossville I gloried in avowing my preference for him; but as the poor homeless Gertrude, 'tis he must now seek me—my heart may break, but it will not bend—I will wait—I will be to him all or nothing!" But she almost gasped as she repeated to Lyndsay, "I will wait——" Then, after a pause, she added, with a deep blush, "But do you what you think right for me."

And Lyndsay's generous disinterested spirit, guided upon every occasion by that heavenly principle, "Do unto others even as you would that others should do unto you," prompted him to write and acquaint Delmour with the truth. As the daughter of Lewiston, he was certain he would never have stooped to an alliance with Gertrude; but whether, as she was now situated, he would still fulfil his engagement, was a doubtful question. At any rate, it was due to him to be undeceived; and though he comprehended and approved of the delicacy which kept Gertrude silent, he deemed it but the more incumbent on him to declare the truth. He therefore wrote a simple and brief statement of what had passed, without noticing or alluding to any thing else; and having despatched his letter, he awaited the answer in an agitation of mind little inferior to Gertrude's.

Meanwhile Dr Bruce and Mr and Miss Black had successively arrived, and it was Lyndsay's painful task to make the two latter acquainted with the guilty transaction, which he did in the gentlest and most delicate manner. But, however desirous he was of sparing their feelings, it was impossible to soften the disgraceful fact, which fell upon them like a thunderbolt, and affected them each according to the difference of their mind and feelings. When the first shock had been surmounted, it was settled that Miss Black should remain at Rossville for the present in attendance upon Mrs St Clair,

whose situation was such as to disarm every hostile feeling, even could such have found harbour in her sister's breast. But it was in sorrow, not in anger, that she acknowledged the disgrace which had fallen upon them; and Lyndsay hoped that her soft unupbraiding spirit might tend to calm Gertrude's wilder grief—but Gertrude refused to see her.

"Do not," said she to Lyndsay, with an agitation that shook her whole frame—"do not ask me to see any one at present—*never* ask me to see the sister of——" she stopped, shuddering.

"But you forgive her, Gertrude?" said Lyndsay.

Gertrude was silent for some moments; then exclaimed with a burst of emotion—

"Oh! it is dreadful to have been thus striving against nature—striving to love as my mother her who was my bitterest enemy—she has broken bands which God himself had knit—my mother! and I knew her not as such!—gentle and uncomplaining, I treated her as my servant—Oh! may God forgive me—but do not ask me to forgive *her!*"

"Ah, Gertrude! it was not thus we were taught to pray by Him who forgave us!"

But Gertrude only wept in bitterness of heart.

"Dear Gertrude! you have been heroic—will you not be forgiving?—Do not let me think you find it easier to be great than to be good."

"For you I would do much," said Gertrude, in increasing emotion—"I would do even this, if I could—but I *cannot*—do not, then—do not name her to me," cried she passionately, while she pressed her hands on her bosom, as if to still the tumult of her soul.—"She it is who has made me the lost, degraded, wretched being that I am, and ever must remain!"—and again her tears burst forth.

"How you disappoint me, Gertrude!" said Lynd-

say, with a sigh.—"I had flattered myself that the same greatness of mind which led you to cast far from you all that you most prized upon earth, would at the same time have taught you the worthlessness of those mere worldly objects.—Ungrateful that you are!—which of all the gifts a liberal Creator has endowed you with would you exchange for those empty distinctions which one creature bestows upon another?—Would you exchange your beauty for rank—your talents for wealth—your greatness of mind for extended power—for all of them would you exchange your immortal soul?—Ah, Gertrude! what avails it by what name we are called for the few short years of our earthly pilgrimage?—If to be made fit partakers of immortal life is, as I believe it is, the sole end of existence, all that we are called upon to endure here are but means for that end. Do not impute your trials, then, severe as they are, to a being such as yourself — but look upon them as instruments in the hand of God, it may be to bring you unto Him. Even in this world, Gertrude, you may yet live to reap in smiles what has been sown in tears, if you will look for happiness where it is only to be found."

Gertrude shook her head, and still wept; but her tears were softer, and her agitation less violent.

Lyndsay's was not that indiscreet zeal which would break the bruised reed, and quench the smoking flax, in its blind misjudging enthusiasm. He looked not that the soil should be harrowed, and the seed sown, and the harvest reaped, at one and the same time; but he trusted that the influence of Divine truth would bring peace to the soul, still fainting with agony beneath the load assigned to it; and that the heart which God had stricken would yet, in prostrating itself at the throne of grace, and acknowledging Him in all His ways, rise superior to the changes of this passing world. "O, virtue! when this solemn pageantry of earthly grandeur

shall be no more; when all distinctions but moral and religious shall vanish; when this earth shall be dissolved; when the moon shall be no more a light by night, neither the sun by day;—thou shalt still survive, thy votary's immortal friend—thou shalt appear like thy great Author in perfect beauty; thy lustre undiminished, thy glory imperishable!" *

——o——

Chapter cij.

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou—and from thy sleep
Then wake to weep.

SHELLEY.

GERTRUDE now experienced the agony of suspense in all its intensity. Restless and unquiet she walked about her own apartment, or starting at every sound stopped to listen with suspended breath—then pressed her throbbing heart, as though she could have stilled its tumults by the touch of her hand.

"Why do I submit to this—why do I endure it?" inquired she of herself, as she bent her burning brow in shame at the tears that had fallen in showers on her lover's picture, on which she had been gazing,—"He left me, and at what a time!—No, I will not wait to be rejected—cast off like something vile—I will go, if it were to beg;" and for a moment she formed the desperate resolution of leaving Rossville secretly—of flying she knew not, cared not where—she would find

* Jeremiah Seed.

some spot on which to lay her aching head till death should close her eyes. But then the madness of the scheme struck her—she felt she could not mingle with the vulgar throng:—young, distinguished, and delicately bred, where could she find a shelter? Lyndsay, 'tis true, had offered her a home—but her spirit already bowed beneath the load of gratitude she owed to him. Then, with that ebb and flow of mind which is ever the effect of powerful excitement, returned her faith in Delmour—yes—it was—it must be his love for her which had hurried him from her.—His was not that selfish passion—he had said so a thousand times—which would plunge the object he loved in all the wretchedness of poverty; and she knew that he was poor—that he was even in debt—that it was impossible he could support her as he would have his wife appear; but he had gone to prevail upon his brother to provide for them, and he would come—Oh yes! he would come and claim her as his own!

It was thus Gertrude communed with herself—her mind either a prey to despair, or busied in vain fantastic dreams, which, even if they were destined to be realised, it was idleness to indulge. Her agitation was not lessened when, on the third morning after her lover's departure, intelligence arrived of the death of Mr Delmour!

Gertrude was not so callous to right feeling as not to hear of this event with mingled grief and awe; and the moral was too striking not to fall with conviction on her heart. With tears she acknowledged the vanity—the emptiness of worldly distinction; and, kneeling, prayed—for the moment fervently, devoutly prayed, in all the humiliation of a contrite spirit and an awakened heart.

Lyndsay did not omit the opportunity of enforcing the solemn lesson which came to shed its calming in-

fluence on her ruffled breast. It, indeed, required no very high sense of religion, at such a time, to feel the utter insignificance of mere worldly greatness, and to acknowledge that its grandeurs are vapours—its pleasures illusions—its promises falsehoods—when he on whom it seemed to have lavished all that it had to bestow was now, as if in mockery—

> . . . . . A thing, at thought of which
> The roused soul swells boundless and sublime!

But alas! these wholesome thoughts were yet strangers in Gertrude's heart; and the first sudden shock over, bright thoughts began to spring up even from the ashes of the dead.

> Even in this hour of grief and fears,
> When awful Truth unveil'd appears,
> Some pow'r unknown usurps my breast;
> Back to the world my thoughts are led,
> My feet in folly's lab'rinth tread,
> And fancy dreams that life is blest.

Again Gertrude's heart bounded, as she thought her lover was now Earl of Rossville—able, and— could she doubt?—willing to restore her to all she had lost. *She* would have renounced all for him—she had stood the test, and a thousand, aye, ten thousand times, had he wished that it were in his power to prove to her the disinterestedness of his love in return.

There was no longer room for uncertainty; although he might not choose to involve her in the hardships and privations of poverty, yet how would he exult in raising her to the height from which she had descended! And again gay and vainglorious visions began to swim before those eyes still wet with tears of penitence for former follies.

Suspense was now changed into impatience scarcely lest supportable, as she counted the days and hours

which must elapse before she could receive the assurance of her lover's faith; but at length the time came when she might hear from him—but no letter was there. Another—and another—and another day passed on, every instant of which was as an age of agony to Gertrude's throbbing heart, as again it was overwhelmed with a sea of doubts, and again the sickness of hope deferred crept like poison through her veins. But who can count the beatings of the lonely heart? Once more she had watched from her window the arrival of the post—again she had held her breath to listen for the footstep that was to bring her the letter on which her existence seemed to depend; but a long and dreary pause followed. At length it was broken by a message from Lyndsay, requesting to see her.

"Something is wrong!" thought she; "he is dead—or——" she could not finish the sentence, even in imagination; but pale, trembling, gasping for breath, she repaired to the library, where she was told he awaited her.

Her own agitation was too great to permit her to notice Lyndsay's, as he advanced to meet her, and would have spoken, but the words died on his lips. Then Gertrude looked on him; but it was not grief that was depicted in his countenance—yet neither was it joy, but a strange mingled expression agitated his usually serene features, which she in vain strove to construe. He took her hand; but it was in a manner more respectful and with an air more embarrassed than he was wont to testify towards her, with whom he had hitherto been on the familiar footing of a friend.

"You have heard—you have heard"—cried Gertrude; but she could say no more.

"I have," said Lyndsay, with an emotion he vainly tried to master; "Gertrude—dearest Gertrude!——" he turned from her for a moment, and paced the

chamber in disorder; while Gertrude, bereft of all motion, stood pale and speechless.—Suddenly he approached her; and putting a letter into her hands, he held them locked in his, while he said in a voice choked with agitation—

"Gertrude—I cannot now say what I feel; but if, at this time, you can think of me at all, think of me as your truest, your firmest friend—as one who shares your every feeling." He then quitted the apartment; but Gertrude was scarcely conscious he had spoken, for a glance of her eye had told her the letter was from Delmour. It was an opened one, and addressed to Lyndsay. With desperate courage she unfolded it—she began to read it with a beating heart and a trembling hand; but as she went on, every nerve and fibre felt as though they were hardening into stone. It was as follows:—

"Dear Lyndsay,

"The melancholy intelligence of my lamented brother's death would reach you some days ago—that, together with the heartrending scene I went through at Rossville, was almost too much for me, and must be my excuse for having so long delayed acknowledging your letter. Perhaps another motive, still more powerful, has also influenced me, which I know I need not hesitate to avow to you.—It is the earnest heartfelt desire I have to do every justice to one, who, though still dearer to me than life, and whom it is distraction to me even to think of relinquishing—yet, at present, I fear I may not venture to call mine—yet mine I know she is, and ever will be in heart, as Heaven knows how wholly I am hers!—But, circumstanced as we both are, it would be folly, madness—in short, you must be aware of the difficulties with which I have to contend.—You know, and I do not hesitate to acknowledge, that I

consider birth as the most important of all distinctions; and, I believe, I am not singular in my sentiments upon this subject, at least I find my uncle the Duke (whom I ventured to sound upon this matter) is still more decided in his opinion; and as he is now in a very declining state, and has much in his own power, I own I am unwilling to come to extremities with him at present. You are aware that the Rossville property did not prove sufficient, during the last year, to support the dignity of the family, and that debts to a large amount have in consequence been incurred.—I am far from intending to convey the most distant insinuation against the dear object of my affections; for if any blame was imputable, it would be, perhaps, more justly due to me. But she only lived as her rank demanded, and as I should choose my wife to do; and I merely mention this to prove to you that I am, at present, far from independent —as my own debts (that to yourself amongst others, dear Lyndsay) are of considerable magnitude, and both together leave me little choice as to what, in common prudence, I am called upon to do. Distressing as it is, I consider myself therefore compelled, for the present, to relinquish those hopes which have so long formed the happiness of my life, and which I will still cherish even in spite of fate—a time may, and, I trust, will yet come, when no such heartrending alternative will be necessary. Meanwhile, it is my most anxious wish that every thing should be done that can possibly contribute to the peace and comfort of my adored Gertrude, and I entreat you will therefore prevail upon her to remain at Rossville. It is my intention to go abroad for a year or two, and it will materially contribute to my tranquillity to know that she is still mistress there, and in possession of all those enjoyments which I know she prizes so much. I must therefore entreat your good offices to have every thing arranged on this point. Let her choose whom

she will to reside with her; or, should she persist in choosing another residence, let every thing be arranged in the most liberal manner. I inclose you an order upon Coutts, that you may draw on my account for whatever is requisite—let nothing be wanting that can, in any degree, tend to embellish an existence which, alas! like my own, will I fear from henceforth be but a wretched one. Dear Lyndsay, to your hands I commit my treasure—on your friendship I place the utmost reliance. I know her affections are mine—wholly mine—and I——but who that has loved Gertrude could ever love another?—I will endeavour to write to her myself when my nerves have regained some firmness; but at present you may judge of the state of my mind from this distracted scrawl. Write to me, I entreat of you, dear Lyndsay—tell me how my dearest love bears herself—write by return of post—tell me all—every thing; and believe me your affectionate

"ROSSVILLE.

"P.S.—The law people are taking the necessary steps to have my rights recognised. Contrive to save my adored Gertrude's feelings as much as possible on this occasion."

——o——

Chapter clij.

. . . . . Go to! hath life
A blessing yet for me? I have no country,
I have no house, a refuge from my ills. EURIPIDES.

SUCH was the letter; and when Gertrude had read it her head sank on her breast, as she murmured—

"For him I would have abandoned all—all!"

She could not have found a name for the wretched-

ness which wrung her heart, and for a moment her spirit felt as if crushed beneath the weight—but by one desperate effort she seemed to cast it from her; and instantly rising, with a mien outwardly calm, save for her burning cheek and quivering lip, she passed to the adjoining room, where Lyndsay was waiting with the most intense anxiety the effect which this communication would produce. As Gertrude returned the letter, she merely bent her head to him; but he saw that her eyes were tearless, and under the influence of high-wrought but repressed feeling there was something more than usually calm and noble in her air and bearing. She moved on towards a door, at the opposite end of the room, which communicated with her own suite of apartments, and Lyndsay made no attempt to detain her; but when her hand was upon the lock she turned round, and, approaching him, took his hand, and pressed it between hers—

"My dear—my only friend!" said she, "may God bless you!"

"Why do you say so now, dearest Gertrude?" cried Lyndsay, fearing, he knew not what, from the unnatural calmness of her manner.

"Because—because I feel it!" said Gertrude, with a sigh, as though her heart had broke.

"And I—may I too say all I feel for you?" said Lyndsay, with emotion.

"No—why should you feel for me?—I am well—quite well," said she, with the same sort of wild calmness; "but I will never forget your kindness to me!"

A tear gleamed in her eye as she turned away. Lyndsay made an effort to detain her, as he exclaimed, "Speak, then—tell me what you would have me do to serve you—to save you, if I can, from——"

Gertrude gently disengaged herself from him, while she said in a firm voice, "I will not remain here—but

I have arrangements to make before I go:—do not seek to detain me!"

"Where will you go, dearest Gertrude?—my house is yours, and my aunt——"

"I will not go to your house, Edward," said Gertrude, and her voice began to falter:—then, making an effort to regain her composure, she quickly added, "I know not yet where I shall go—I must have time—I have arrangements to make—but I cannot breathe here"—and she gasped as she spoke; then, waving her hand to Lyndsay, she hastily entered her own apartment.

Still Gertrude's energy did not forsake her, as she set about her preparations; but she mistook for fortitude what in reality was only fever of mind, and it was under that false excitement that she acted. She was alive but to one feeling—she had been deserted by him for whom she would have sacrificed the world itself—him whom she loved sufficiently even to have renounced—him whom every hallowed obligation, every principle of honour, every feeling of tenderness, had bound to her by ties she had considered as indissoluble! He had dared to insult her by supposing she would choose to be indebted to his bounty for her support—he deemed her unworthy of being his wife—and he would have her submit to become his pensioner!—to live upon his alms!—to be clothed and fed by him!—to drag out a life of dependence amid those very scenes which had witnessed her in the full meridian of her prosperity! She could not—she would not consider what she was to do—whither she was to go: it mattered not what became of her were she but away from Rossville—she would work—beg—starve—but she would not sink into a base stipendiary.

But, alas! Gertrude knew nothing of life and its ways, when she reasoned thus—she knew nothing of

those various manners and degrees in which every human being—even those possessed of the loftiest feelings of independence—are bound more or less to one another. She only panted to escape from the degradation she felt she was enduring, and every other idea was absorbed in that single one.

But when her arrangements were completed, then the dreadful sense of her own utter loneliness came upon her; and she pressed her throbbing temples in agony, as she leant her head upon her hand, and vainly strove to think of whither and to whom she would go. But "the world seem'd all before her where to choose," for she had no claim upon any one being in it; and who would claim her—abject—degraded—fallen as she was? —No one but the generous noble-minded Lyndsay, and he was the last person she would have recourse to—she could not bear that he should look upon her in her humiliation—he knew that she had been rejected—forsaken—he had seen that heart which had been so fondly sought, so proudly won, now cast back upon her as a thing of nought!

She was roused from this agony of thought by the entrance of her maid to announce that Mr Ramsay was in the saloon, and wished to see her.

"I will not see him—I will not see any one that——" and again the horror which she felt for all connected with the author of her misery rushed upon her.

"My lady!" exclaimed Miss Masham.

"I am not your lady—I am—but no matter—you will know all when I am gone——Gone!—Where, whither?" repeated she to herself. Then the sudden resolution seized her that she would see Mr Ramsay—he would take her from Rossville—no matter what became of her after that; and not daring to deliberate, she hastily passed on to the apartment, still under the

excitement of feelings strained to their utmost stretch.

Mr Ramsay had been made acquainted by Mr Black with the discovery which had taken place, and for some time indignation against Mrs St Clair was the only feeling that found place in his breast; then, as that somewhat abated, his heart began to yearn with pity towards the victim of her guilt, and at length that stranger sentiment (for uncle Adam was not prone to the indulgence of such weakness) gradually grew into something almost akin to joy at the thought that she, whom he had always loved for her resemblance to his first and only love, was indeed her descendant. The resemblance, even in his mind's eye, grew twenty times stronger; and he felt that he should look upon her with greater delight as the granddaughter of Lizzie Lundie than ever he had done as Countess of Rossville. She was his own nearest relation, too; for Lizzie and he had been cousins-german—brother and sister's children; while his connection with the Blacks was only by half-blood. All this uncle Adam had revolved over and over again, as he paced his little chamber irresolute how to act. At length, unable to come to any fixed determination, he took chaise from the Blue Boar, and set off for Rossville, where he arrived, as if heaven-directed, at the very moment when his appearance seemed, indeed, an interposition of Providence. For the first time, he voluntarily extended his hand, and grasped Gertrude's in it with a vehemence which was indicative of the warmth and sincerity of his goodwill. Both were silent for some moments, for even uncle Adam, for the time, seemed overcome; but, at length, he said—

"It is needless to say ony thing aboot it—I dinna want to hear ony mair—just tell me whether I can do you ony gude.—Will you gang wi' me?"

"Oh! yes—yes," cried Gertrude—"take me from this—oh! take me now——"

"But stay now—are you sure you're ready?" said Mr Ramsay, who was not quite so rapid in his movements; and who, although perfectly sincere in his offer, had not expected it to be so promptly acted upon. Moreover, he was not quite sure that they perfectly understood each other, and he thought some explanation necessary before they set off together. He would fain have put the question in a delicate form, but he had never been accustomed to sounding, and delicacy was not his *fort;* he was, therefore, fain to have recourse to his own method of gaining information, which was, to put the question in the most direct manner; and he said, with his usual bluntness—

"Do you ken whar it is you're gawin?"

The question struck like a dagger to Gertrude's heart; and, smote with the consciousness of her own desolation, she could not speak—she turned away her head to hide the burning drops that forced their way from her eyes.

"I have no home," said she, in a voice choking with emotion; "I am a beggar!"

"I'm very glad to hear't," said uncle Adam, warmly; "that's just the very thing I wanted—I rejoice that you're to owe naething to that prood thrawn pack—so come wi' me, my dawtie, and ye's no want for ony thing that I hae to gie you—Lizzie Lundie's bairn will be my bairn—so come your ways. —'The bird maun flichter that flees wi' ae wing'—but ye's haud up your head yet in spite o' them a'."

In the tumult of her mind Gertrude had entirely overlooked the ties which bound her, the daughter of Jacob Lewiston, to him whom she had only known as the uncle of Mrs St Clair; but now it glanced upon her that in uncle Adam she beheld a relation of her

own—the only being with whom she might claim kindred. But she was too wretched even to feel pleasure at the discovery; she only considered that he would take her away—that he would give her a shelter, and there she would die, and be heard of no more.

"Is there naebody here you wad see before you gang?" said Mr Ramsay, as she was hurrying wildly away.

"No—no," cried she, impatiently; then suddenly stopping, "Yes, I have one kind friend to whom I will say farewell once more," as the thought glanced upon her that Lyndsay would be glad to see her so protected, and she sent to say she wished to see him. He instantly hastened to her, and was made acquainted with the arrangement which had been made, though he was still left in ignorance of the relationship which subsisted between them; for Gertrude, in the fervour of her mind, had already ceased to think of it, and uncle Adam, from certain tender feelings, was unwilling to enter into particulars.

Although he was not exactly the person to whose hands Lyndsay would have chosen to commit Gertrude; yet, situated as she was, even uncle Adam's home was better than none, especially as he most cordially invited him to come to it as often as he pleased.

"There is one person you wished me to see, and I would not," said Gertrude, in agitation, to Lyndsay, as she was almost on the threshold to depart; "but now I would see *her* sister before I go."

And the wish was no sooner signified to Miss Black than she hastened to comply with it. At sight of her a slight tremour shook Gertrude's frame; but she neither wept nor spoke—she merely kissed her twice with fervour, then turned away, and bade a long farewell to Rossville. The same day Mrs St Clair was removed to the house of her sisters.

Chapter cib.

Sorrows are well allow'd, and sweeten nature,
Where they express no more than drops on lilies;
But when they fall in storms they bruise our hopes,—
Make us unable, though our comforts meet us,
To hold our heads up.

MASSINGER.

BUT this state of high-wrought feeling could not long continue. In vain Gertrude struggled against the burning sense of her wrongs and her wretchedness—in vain she repressed each rising sigh and starting tear, with lofty scorn at the weakness they would have betrayed—in vain she repeated to herself a thousand times that she was calm—she was well. Her throbbing head and aching heart told another tale; and she was at length compelled to yield to the fever which, for some time, had been preying upon her. Then reason fled, and for many days her life was doubtful; and, during that time, poor uncle Adam, like some faithful mastiff, hung round the bed which contained this new-found treasure, in all the stern woe of rigid old age. Lyndsay was the only person (excepting the medical attendants) whom he would see; but to him he would utter the grief which filled his heart even to overflowing, long closed as it had been against each softer feeling; and Lyndsay, even in the midst of his own anguish, strove to cheer and support the disconsolate old man. But the object of all this solicitude was once more restored to them—the crisis of the fever was past, and Gertrude again woke to consciousness. It was only then she was aware of the danger she had passed; she had walked unconsciously through the valley of the shadow of death—the gates of eternity had been before her, but she had not descried

them. It was then, while still hovering on the confines of this world, that she felt all the emptiness and the vanity of its pleasures: her dreams of greatness—her hopes of happiness—her gay-spent days—her festive nights, where were they now?—Gone; and where they had been was marked but with shame—disappointment—remorse! All earthly distinctions had been hers—and what was the account which she had now to render to God for the use of these His gifts? On which of these was it that she would now build her hopes of acceptance with Him?—on which of them would she now rest her hopes of eternal happiness? Alas! miserable comforters were they all!

A deep melancholy now took possession of Gertrude's mind. Like all persons of an ardent and enthusiastic temperament, she flew from one extreme to the other; and what had formerly "whispered as faults now roared as crimes," only to be expiated by a life of penitence and sorrow. She kept her own apartment—refused to see any body, even Lyndsay, and passed her time in solitude and woe. In vain did uncle Adam attempt to stem the tide of affliction which had thus broken in upon her shattered heart. She acknowledged his kindness with tears and with gratitude; but when he attempted to remonstrate with her, or urged her to see any one, she became violently agitated; and her only answer was, "If you love me, suffer me—oh! suffer me to die in peace!"

The indulgence of her grief had now become a sort of strange unnatural luxury to her; she loved to sit for hours brooding on her sorrows—to hoard them, as it were, in her own heart—she could not have borne that another should have shared in them; she loved to think that no one *could* share in them—that she stood alone in the world—a wretched, forsaken, lonely thing. To a heart such as hers the existence of some powerful

sentiment was necessary—she had strove to tear from her heart every root, every fibre of her once cherished tenderness; but no flower had arisen to fill the void they had left. All was dreariness and desolation.

Lyndsay had written to her repeatedly, urging and imploring her to see him, and using every argument to rouse her from this wasteful excess of grief; but she only wept when she read his letters, and wished that he would cease to think of one so wretched, so degraded as she was.

Poor uncle Adam was almost heartbroken at this pertinacity of suffering; all that he possessed, he had told her again and again, should be hers—she should go to Broom Park—she should be mistress there—she should have every thing that gold and goodwill could procure to make her happy; but Gertrude would only exclaim, "No—no—once I had wealth and power and how did I abuse them!—leave me then, the beggar that I am—that I deserve to be!"

She was in this state of mind, when one day the door of her apartment was gently opened, and Anne Leslie slowly entered. At sight of her Gertrude turned away her head in displeasure at the intrusion; but Anne caught her hand, and, as she respectfully kissed it, her tears dropt upon it. Gertrude stood some moments irresolute; then, throwing herself on Anne's neck, she exclaimed, with a burst of anguish—

"You trusted in God, and He has not deceived you—while I——" she stopped, overcome with the acuteness of remembrance.

"But you *will* trust in Him, and He will yet put gladness in your heart," said Anne, wiping away the tears from her own sweet serene face, where shone the peaceful calm of a heavenly mind.

"No—never! I do not desire to be happy!" said Gertrude—"I do not deserve to be happy!" added she, in an accent of despair.

"Ah!—who has ever deserved that happiness which we owe to a Saviour's love? 'If Thou, Lord shouldest mark iniquities, who shall stand?' Guilty and frail as we all are, which of us would dare to lift up our eyes to Heaven, and say we merited its favour?"

"But I had power, and I misused it—I had wealth, and I squandered it—I had an idol, and——"

"Alas!" said Anne, meekly, "who can weigh even their own actions in the balance? If your errors were more glaring than mine, so were your temptations greater. He only who made the heart can judge it, for He only knows what have been its trials."

"He knows," said Gertrude, bitterly, "that, in the day of prosperity, mine was far from Him."

"And therefore He has deprived you of those vain delights which would have separated your soul from Himself. Do not then turn away from God as from an offended Judge, whose anger you fear; but look to Him as to a tender Father reconciled to His erring child through the merits and mediation of One who has borne our sins, and who invites you and me and all of us to come and receive from Him the pardon and the blessing He has purchased for us."

"The pardon *may* be mine, for God is merciful!" said Gertrude. "But what blessing is now left for me?" added she in an accent of despair.

"The blessing of God—if you will but open your heart to receive it," said Anne, tenderly. "Ah! think of those blessed words, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!'"

"Aye," said Gertrude, in the same sad tone; "there *is* a place where the weary are at rest!"

"But that is not the rest which God has provided for His children," said Anne; "that would indeed be a gloomy prospect, if we looked but to the grave as the

end of our trials. Remember these were words uttered in the agony of a soul struggling with the powers of darkness, but afterwards repented of in the dust and ashes of a heart enlightened and renewed by divine grace."

A low convulsive sigh was Gertrude's only answer; and Anne continued her efforts to administer consolation and encouragement to the heart whose only aliment seemed its own intense wretchedness.

"Even on this side of the grave, dear Gertrude! there is a rest for those who will accept it—a rest from the dominion of sin and worldly sorrow, and a happy rest; not the rest of oblivion, but the rest of unalloyed enjoyment beyond the grave——"

"The grave is now the only possession I covet," said Gertrude, as she bent her head, and shaded her face with her hand, as if to hide the anguish it would have betrayed.

Poor Anne's gentle heart was filled to overflowing at this pertinacity in wretchedness in one so young, so fair, so gifted, and for some moments tears choked her utterance. "No, no," said she earnestly, "you must not give way to such gloomy despairing thoughts. You take to yourself the words of Job in the hour of tribulation and strong temptation; but you forget how the soul which had looked but to death for deliverance, which had even prayed to be cut off from the presence of its Maker, yet lived to bless the mercy and goodness of God, and to rejoice even in this world in the rest which it found in the knowledge of its Redeemer."

"I pray that I may be enabled to *endure* existence," said Gertrude: "as to ever again enjoying it——"

"Not in the same manner or kind," said her friend; "but be assured God would not have taken away your enjoyments, but to give you something better and more enduring; you know that He who stilled the tempest

with a word can also speak peace to the troubled heart —a peace which the world can neither give nor take away."

But Gertrude only sighed, for the promise afforded no consolation to her. To the young and imaginative nothing seems less desirable than a state of calm; and while the heart is still heaving beneath the influence of the storm that has swept over it, it yet shrinks from the prospect of the deathlike stillness that must succeed.

But young as Anne was in years, she was experienced in heavenly wisdom, and, in the character of the faithful minister's wife, well-skilled in the angel art of administering consolation to the afflicted; of cheering the downcast mourner; of pouring balm into the wounded spirit; of binding up the broken heart. Day after day she devoted herself to the task, regardless of all selfish considerations, till at length Gertrude's feelings were touched by such unwearying love and tenderness, and she began to evince something like pleasure at sight of her; then to listen to her conversation with somewhat of interest; and at length she consented to receive a visit from Mr Lyndsay.

That was an act of humiliation, and she felt it as such;—thus to meet in her low and fallen state, as an object of pity, those whom in the days of her pride and prosperity she had despised and deceived! But these painful feelings passed away in the soothing intercourse and respectful sympathy of those truly Christian friends. By degrees Gertrude's heart opened to the holy influence of those divine truths they so earnestly yet gently sought to impress upon it; and gradually her soul emerged from the dreary stupor in which it had so long been buried, and her mind became soothed and composed beneath the calming influence of that religion whose very essence is love and peace. She saw that her heart had gone astray in its own delusions, but these

were now dispelled. She had received a new impulse; and she had awakened, if not to happiness, at least to something less perishable—less fatal. Hers had been "a young fancy, which could convert the sound of common things to something exquisite;" but now she bowed her heart in quietness—she knew "her blighted prospects could revive no more; yet was she calm, for she had heaven in view."

Be thence encouraged more, when tried,
On the best Father to confide;
O! my too blind but nobler part,
Be moved! Be won by these, my heart!
See of how rich a lot, how bless'd,
The true believer stands possess'd!

Come, backward soul, to God resign;
Peace, His best blessing, shall be thine:
Boldly recumbent on His care,
Cast thy full burden only there.

LUTHER.

———o———

Chapter cb.

Forgiveness to the injur'd does belong;
But they ne'er pardon who commit the wrong.

DRYDEN.

IT was with emotion that Gertrude and Lyndsay met once more, and both were struck with the change in each other's appearance; for Lyndsay, too, looked as though he had indeed borne a part in all her sufferings—and she was smote with the selfishness which had caused her so long to indulge her sorrow, unmindful of the generous heart which had shared in it. But if the brilliancy of her beauty was dimmed by the blight which had fallen upon her, it had acquired a character of still deeper interest in the eyes of those who loved her.

. . . . . Her pale cheek,
Like a white rose on which the sun hath look'd
Too wildly warm (is not this passion's legend?)—
The drooping lid whose lash is wet with tears—
A lip which has the sweetness of a smile,
But not its gaiety—do not these bear
The scorching foot-prints sorrow leaves in passing
O'er the clear brow of youth?

"I would first see you to acknowledge the boundless gratitude I owe for all your kindness to me," said Gertrude, who was the first to speak; "and then——once you asked me to forgive her who had injured me, and I would not, for then I was proud, passionate, revengeful; but now I would go to her—I would forgive her, even as I trust I have been forgiven!"

"Dearest Gertrude!" said Lyndsay, with emotion, "how happy this makes me! But do not humble me by talking of your gratitude to me—to have done less than I have done, when the means were in my power, would have been criminal—if I have been enabled to serve you, that is recompence more than sufficient.—I have borne a selfish part in your welfare, for your happiness was mine—in vain my heart has tried to create a separate interest—it cannot——"

"Do not talk thus, my dear friend," said Gertrude, in agitation.

"Ah, Gertrude! since the same true and immortal passion has touched our hearts, suffer me now to avow the sentiments which I have so long cherished for you——"

"No, no—not now," cried Gertrude, in increasing emotion; "be to me all that you have hitherto been—a friend, a guardian, a brother—but——"

She sighed, and, in spite of herself, a tear rolled slowly down her cheek.

"I will, then," said Lyndsay; for he feared that the ties which bound them might be broken in the effort to draw them closer.

Gertrude went to the house of the Miss Blacks, and was received by them with tears of tenderness and thankfulness.

Mrs St Clair had recovered from the effects of the laudanum she had swallowed, and it was now her determination to go abroad for the remainder of her life, and in a few days she was to depart.

"She talked much of you for some time," said Miss Black, "and said she could not die in peace till she had obtained your forgiveness; but of late—alas! since her health has been restored she has thought, I fear, less seriously—and she has not spoken of you at all—perhaps she may even be averse to see you." And she went to acquaint her that Gertrude was there.

Some time elapsed before she returned, and she said her sister had been violently agitated at the thoughts of seeing Gertrude, and had at first refused to do it; but that she was now more composed, and had consented to receive her, upon condition that she came alone. The room was darkened to which Gertrude was conducted; but there was a studied arrangement—an air of elegant seclusion about it, which at once indicated that the inmate was unchanged. No symptom of penitence was there, amidst a display of frivolous, heartless selfishness. She was attired in an elegant *déshabille;* and her *fauteuil*—her cushions—her footstool—her screen—her flowers—her perfumes—her toys, were all collected around her in the manner Gertrude had been so long accustomed to see them, and on the arrangement of which Mrs St Clair had been wont to pique herself, as a combination of French elegance and English comfort.

For a moment Gertrude's agitation almost overpowered her at again beholding one whom she had hitherto been accustomed to look upon as the author of her being—but whom she could now only view as the

author of all her woe. But she repressed her feelings; and, extending her hand, said mildly—

"I am come to offer that forgiveness which I once refused; but God has softened my heart and humbled my pride—I can now forgive, as I hope to be forgiven."

"I too have something to forgive," said Mrs St Clair, vehemently; "I have to forgive the cruel disregard—the unnatural, unrelenting violence, with which you treated one who had ever been as a mother to you in all but the natural tie.—I had done all for your aggrandisement—I had raised you from beggary and obscurity to wealth and greatness; and it is you who have brought me to shame, and misery, and poverty—and am I to have nothing to forgive? I humbled myself in the dust to you, and you were deaf to my prayers—I told you that my life was in your hands: that it did not pay the forfeit of your rash and inhuman conduct is no merit of yours—have I then nothing to forgive?—But I do forgive," said she, extending the hand she had hitherto refused, but with an air and manner of haughty condescension: "my wrongs and injuries have been great, but I forgive them."

Gertrude almost recoiled with horror from the touch of one whose mind was still so perverted, and whose soul seemed to have been corroded instead of purified by the judgment that had fallen upon her; but she meekly took her hand, and said—

"Yes—you have also wrongs to forgive me, and I thank you from my heart that you do so.—Mere human forgiveness is, indeed, a thing of nought, more blessed to them who give than to those who receive—may that blessing be yours and mine! and oh! may the forgiveness of God be vouchsafed to us both!"

She would have kissed her in token of reconcilement, but Mrs Clair turned her head haughtily away; and Gertrude, after lingering a few moments in deep emotion,

quitted the apartment. She did not wound her sisters by repeating what had passed; but her own heart felt lighter that she had been enabled to pray in sincerity of heart for heavenly forgiveness, even for her who had wrought all her woe.

———o———

Chapter xxj.

Good the beginning, good the end shall be,
And transitory evil only makes
The good end happier.

SOUTHEY.

THE following day a plain but handsome carriage, with suitable attendants, stood at uncle Adam's door, which he at first seemed ashamed of; but after a little coyness and confusion he let Gertrude understand it was for her accommodation, and proposed that they should together make trial of it.

Gertrude had never appeared abroad (except in her visit to Mrs St Clair) from the time of her arrival at Mr Ramsay's, and a thousand painful feelings rushed upon her at the thoughts of exposing herself to the public gaze—and the public gaze of a small, idle, gossipping, impertinent country town. She was, therefore, on the point of expressing her repugnance; but she thought it would be unkind, ungrateful, when he had sacrificed his feelings so far as to keep a carriage for her, if she did not appear to be gratified by this proof of his affection. She therefore accepted of his proposal, and they set off together. She was not yet sufficiently mistress of her thoughts to bestow much observation on the shifting scenes as they passed along; and she was scarcely aware of where she was, or on what she looked, when she found herself at the very

door of Broom Park. They entered; and a respectable looking housekeeper and butler, with inferiors, stood ready to receive them.

"There's your leddy," said uncle Adam, giving Gertrude a slight push, by way of introducing her; "see that you a' behave discreetly, an' when ye want ony thing ye maun gang to her, for she kens mair about thae things than me."

This was quite an oration for uncle Adam; and having made it, he stotted into one of the public rooms, and Gertrude followed him.

"My dear uncle," said she, for she still continued that appellation, "how your kindness overpowers me! —I cannot express how much I feel it."

"Hoot, it's naething," said he, impatiently; "so dinna gang to fash yourself aboot that—the best thanks you can gie me is to let me see the red on your cheek, and the smile in your e'e that used to be there, and then I'll believe that I've done you some gude—but no till then." And he affectionately patted her shoulder, which was going great lengths for uncle Adam.

Every thing had evidently been done with a view to gratify Gertrude's taste and feelings; and there was good taste and elegance in the arrangements that had recently been made, for which, with all his good intentions, she could scarcely give uncle Adam credit.—It must be Lyndsay's doing—Lyndsay, who knew so well all her habits and pursuits, had provided every indulgence and facility for both; and that, too, merely in a general way, without descending to all the little *minutiæ* which it is woman's prerogative to arrange.

The news of Mr Ramsay's establishment at Broom Park soon circulated in the neighbourhood, and was not long in reaching the ears of Mrs Major Waddell, and caused them to tingle with indignation and envy. In the midst of all her finery she was not happy; for

Gertrude, as uncle Adam's heiress, was the thorn in her side—the bitter drop in her cup—the black man in her closet—the Mordecai at her gate! Such is ever the effect of any baleful passion, especially when operating on a weak mind, and so difficult is it to form an estimate of worldly enjoyment by the symbols of outward prosperity. Her only hope was that she would be able to prove uncle Adam in his dotage; and, for that purpose, she would fain have established a system of *espionage* betwixt Thornbank and Broom Park; but all her schemes were counteracted by uncle Adam's sagacity. The only way in which she could therefore give vent to her malice was when in company with Gertrude, by taking, or rather making, every opportunity of resting all claim to distinction solely on the ground of birth—family—connections, and other such adventitious circumstances, as the weak vulgar mind lays hold of to exalt itself in the eyes of those who must be weaker than itself to be so dazzled. But in this she was met by uncle Adam, who guarded Gertrude, in aught that in any way concerned her, as a faithful shepherd's *colly* does the lamb committed to his charge, and he was now too happy to be discomposed even by Mrs Waddell—he had found something to love, which had long been the desideratum in his life, and he was gradually getting more benign and mellow beneath Gertrude's gentle influence. The first inconveniences of a change of residence and habits fairly over, he even began to take some interest in rural avocations; only stipulating, that he was never to be spoken to on any of the numerous evils inseparable from extensive property, and which not unfrequently embitter the peace of the possessor; such as bad tenants—bad crops—bad weather—bad servants—poachers—robbers—trespassers—and all the thousand ills that wealth is heir to, and which, perhaps, bring happiness more upon

a par between the rich and the poor than is generally supposed.

One of the first to pay her respects to the new heiress of Broom Park was Miss Pratt. That lady's absence, or at least her silence, for so long a period, remains to be accounted for to such as take an interest in her fate. But the simple matter of fact was, that she had been refreshing and invigorating herself at Harrowgate, at the expense of her friend and ally, Sir Peter Wellwood, and had but just returned to give the lie direct to the current report of Gertrude's having been rejected by her lover on the discovery of her birth. This, she roundly asserted, was so far from being the case, that she had, with her own ears, heard her refuse him again and again—it was consistent with her knowledge that she had been long engaged to Edward Lyndsay; and, although the little episode of the turret scene was somewhat of a staggerer, yet even that Miss Pratt contrived to bolt, and settled the matter with herself by her having had a great cold and ringing in her ears all that day, which had prevented her hearing exactly what passed. She therefore boldly claimed her five guineas from uncle Adam, though how far she was entitled to them was a doubtful question, and might have borne a dispute; and time was when uncle Adam would as soon have given her his five fingers as his five guineas upon such debateable ground; but now he was not disposed to cavil at trifles, and he paid her the money at the first suggestion, only taking every possible precaution against the possibility of his giving her a note more than enough.

"Well, my dear," said she, displaying her winnings to Gertrude, "you see I can sing a blithe note at your wedding—ha! ha! ha!—And, by-the-by, do you know the news is, that a certain cast-off lover of yours is on the top of his marriage with his old flame, the

Duchess of St Ives? They're both together at Paris, it seems, and it's all settled. I wish them good of one another, for I fancy they're well met; but whether they'll hang long together is another story."

Gertrude could not hear of this event without some degree of emotion, but it soon passed away; and when, at the end of some months, she read a pompous detail of it in the newspapers, it was with feelings far removed from either envy or regret. Still less would they have been called for, could she have foreseen the termination which a few years brought round. Without the cement of one virtuous principle, vice soon dissolved the tie which united them. Injured and betrayed by a faithless wife, the Earl of Rossville fought to avenge his honour, and fell in the cause. But long before then Lyndsay's virtues, and the fervour and disinterestedness of his attachment, had insensibly created for him a warm interest in Gertrude's affections. As has been truly said, "In considering the actions of the mind, it should never be forgotten that its affections pass into each other like the tints of the rainbow; though we can easily distinguish them when they have assumed a decided colour, yet we can never determine where each hue begins." *

The bewildering glare of romantic passion no longer shed its fair but perishable lustre on the horizon of her existence; but the calm radiance of piety and virtue rose with steady ray, and brightened the future course of a happy and a useful life; and Gertrude, as the wife of Edward Lyndsay, lived to bless the day that had deprived her of her earthly Inheritance. Thus,

. . . . . All our ill
May, if directed well, find happy end.

* Quarterly Review.

THE END.

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